

1995-96

**NBA**  
PREVIEW

Bill Walton and Hubie Brown analyze each NBA team

INSIDE

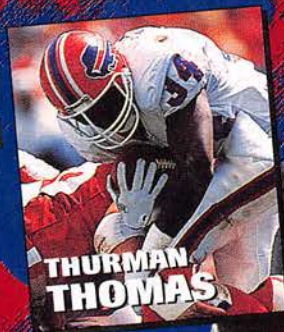
**SPORTS**

November 1995



# The Violent Life of the NFL Running Back

**Emmitt Smith**  
and his fellow  
ball carriers  
know the next  
bone-jarring hit  
could be their last



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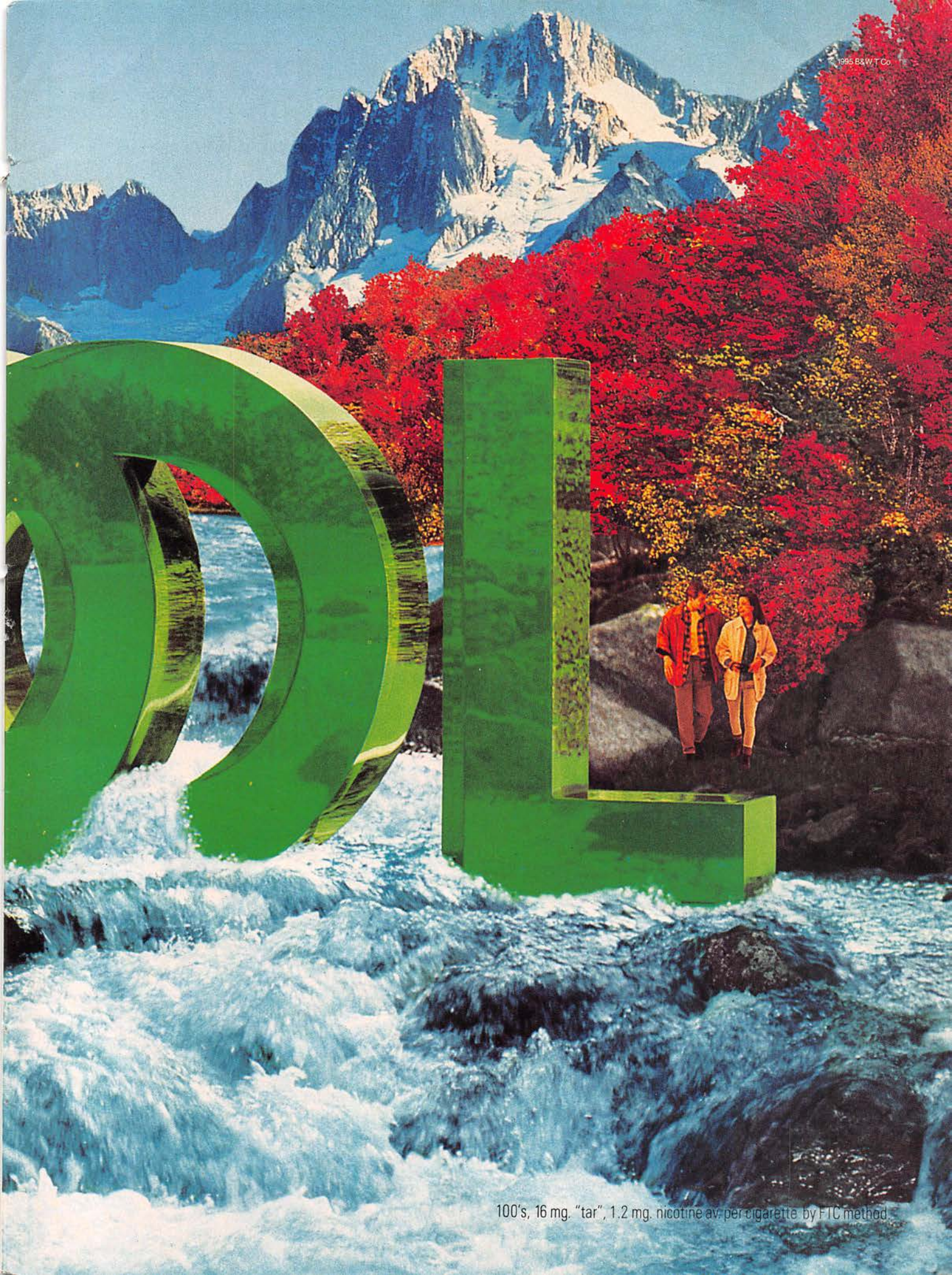


A vibrant autumn landscape featuring a rushing river with white water rapids flowing over dark, jagged rocks. The background is filled with trees displaying brilliant red, orange, and yellow foliage. In the distance, snow-capped mountains rise against a clear blue sky. Overlaid on the center of the image are large, three-dimensional, green letters that spell out 'KCO'. The letters have a metallic sheen and are partially submerged in the river, with water splashing around their bases.

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white  
in your  
bite*



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## ■ A Thinking Cap

It appears the San Francisco 49ers again have miraculously found room under the salary cap where none was apparent. In reality, the "extra cap room" is found by backloading contracts with easily attained incentives that count against the following year's cap. Over the past few years the Niners have bought a defense by spending future cap dollars like a yuppie leasing a BMW and putting the payments on his credit card.

In theory, the 49ers are jeopardizing their chance to be competitive in the future—at least that is what Dallas' Jerry Jones and the other owners are telling the fans of their teams. But consider the fact that the collective bargaining agreement expires in 1999, and unless an agreement is reached to extend it, so does the salary cap—and the 49ers' cap problems disappear!

Why aren't other teams taking the same gamble? Either they truly are men of principle, or they are trying to save money by deluding their fans and ignoring the loophole. As a Cowboys fan, I urge Jones to wake up and either get with the program by offering incentive-laden contracts, or institute some common-sense rules to eliminate the loophole. Such rules could include setting a dollar limit on the amount of incentives that can be offered, or setting a maximum of three years a team can carry over cap dollars. Unless rules such as these are put in, there really is no cap—just an excuse for owners to line their pockets and keep costs down.

**Kerry Don Alexander**  
Solana Beach, Calif.

## ■ Decisions, Decisions...

John Feinstein is a genius ["No. 1, Once and for All," September]. Every person who has anything to do with college football—spectators, coaches, players—should read his article. I've never heard a better argument for a Division I-A football playoff system. Let the best 10 or 12 teams go at it until one team is left standing. It's that simple.

To the best of my knowledge, Division I-A football is the only level of athletics from high school to the pros that does not have a playoff system. That's pathetic. It's

time for the presidents and coaches to come through the time warp and get in line with everyone else.

By the way, last year's game would have ended like so: Nebraska 31, Penn State 20.

**Reginald Graddy**  
Wrightsville, Ga.

Instead of dwelling on the fact that NCAA Division I-A does not have a playoff, how about considering what college football *does* have: a regular season that actually means something (as opposed to college basketball), real rivalries (as opposed to the tepid NFL), no parity (thus numerous truly



**A college game like USC-UCLA means something every year, even when nothing but pride is on the line.**

big—and memorable—games every year), variety (power football still exists in the college game), real tradition, and team identities.

There are millions of football fans across the country for whom the college game is by far the preferred variety. NFL fans can have a nice time enjoying "big games" between 7-7 pro teams. I'll look forward to such rivalries as USC-UCLA, Nebraska-Oklahoma, Georgia-Florida, Tennessee-Alabama, Florida-Florida State...need I go on?

**Mark Dirkschneider**  
Peoria, Ill.

## ■ Back in Black

Oh, my! With the Raiders' return to Oakland, you have to add some games on the silver and black schedule to your list of must-sees ["Of Deion, Dallas, and Do-Rags," August]. These are sure to tickle the football purist's fancy: October 1, Raiders at New York Jets. (Remember "Heidi"?) October 16, Raiders at Denver. (Remember Rob Lytle?) November 27, Raiders at San Diego. (Remember the "Holy Roller"?) December 10, Raiders vs. Pittsburgh Steelers. (Remember Franco's "Immaculate Reception"?)

God bless Al Davis for bringing back the NFL's most beloved franchise. "The Oakland Raiders"—ah, what a ring!

**John Peterson**  
Daytona Beach, Fla.

## ■ More Lloyd

Enjoyed your article on Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Greg Lloyd ["Mama's Boy," August]. I would like to say that those of us who have known Lloyd know him not only as an intense, competitive football player, but also as one who has never forgotten his hometown or the college where he played. Greg has established a scholarship foundation at Fort Valley State College. He is always available to speak to groups on campus and at athletic events.

Contrary to what his opponents say, there is no "thug" in Greg. He plays hard every down, hates to lose, but never plays outside the rules. He is one of the outstanding role models for young people in our community. I have been fortunate enough to coach many outstanding athletes, and Greg Lloyd ranks at the top no matter what criteria are used in judgment.

**Douglas T. Porter**  
Football coach  
Fort Valley State College  
Fort Valley, Ga.

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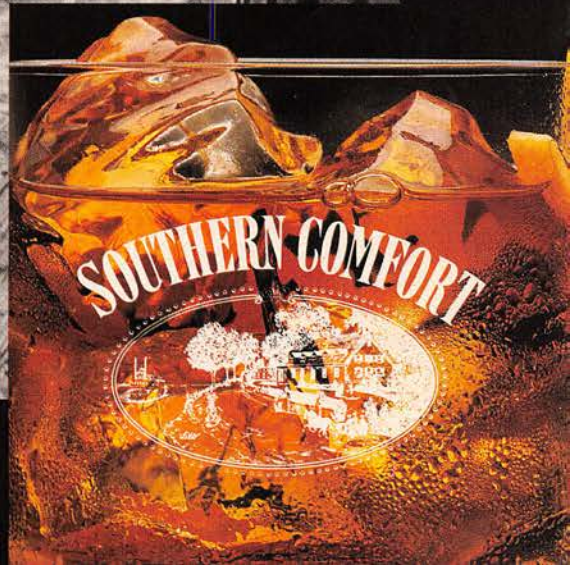


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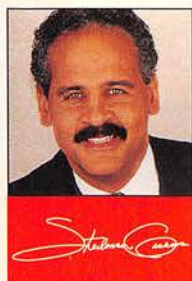
**Take it easy.**





By STEDMAN GRAHAM

## The Brutal Truth of Boxing



LIKE MOST SPORTS fans, I have great respect and affection for George Foreman. His sparkling personality set him apart from the host of mostly anonymous faces that patrolled the boxing rings while Mike

Tyson was in jail, and by winning the heavyweight title over a man 20 years his junior, Foreman sparked the public's imagination at a time when the sport was desperate for good news.

But as much as Foreman has done for his profession, he threatens to do it a severe disservice by calling for mandatory use of headgear in the ring. He and the other advocates clamoring for protective gear to cushion fighters' heads are well-intentioned but simply wrong.

Let's get something straight at the outset: Boxing is a brutal sport. In a little more than a year, four fighters have died from blows received in the ring. That's tragic and heartbreaking—but it is not unpredictable. Boxing is, in essence, an exercise in controlled violence.

Many people in this country are sickened by the idea of watching two men in a confined space trying to inflict pain on each other. However, many others celebrate boxing as a sport that demands sheer athleticism and the ability to make instantaneous, critical decisions. Boxing places a premium on quick reflexes, physical grace, and the mental discipline to develop and stick to a strategy for attacking an opponent's weakness. The sport rewards courage—the guts to stand in, take a punch, and get up if you go down.

Boxing is a love-it-or-hate-it sport. If our society ever reaches a consensus that boxing is too uncivilized and too dangerous, then let's ban it. And when we ban boxing, in order to be consistent, let's also ban football, another sport in which the participants hit one another with enough speed and strength to easily cause serious injury. Let's do away with hockey, a sport in which players slam into one another at extreme

speeds and sometimes use their sticks to inflict head and body injuries. There are minor sports, too, that should be abolished in the same name of civility: rugby, for example, which makes football look like a country club dance.

If our role as a society is to act as protective mothers to people who might do harm to themselves, there are many more athletic activities we should outlaw. The American Medical Association has figured the annual number of boxing-related fatalities at .13 for every 1,000 participants. That's on a par with the death rates in motorcycle racing, parachuting, and hang gliding. If we're going to be a mothering culture, let's ban all these activities.

However, if we're *not* going to do away with boxing and every other potentially dangerous activity in which people voluntarily participate, let's not water down the sport with protective gear that will undermine its popularity and do less to protect fighters than to ease the consciences of those handing out the gear. Foreman and other proponents of headgear for professional boxers claim it *may* keep boxers from suffering severe head injuries.

The arguments against headgear are more compelling.

Call it a barbaric view if you wish, but I believe boxers enter the sport knowing the risks and knowing they will suffer pain—but they do so willingly because of the potential gains. Professional fighters choose to risk their personal safety in return for financial rewards.

Those who regulate and manage the sport have an obligation to prevent unnecessary risks. Make pre-fight physicals more rigorous, and don't hesitate to cancel a bout if there is even a hint that a fighter has a medical problem or is not in proper shape to box. Put the pressure on referees to end a fight more quickly if there is any

question as to the possibility of a fighter risking serious injury; refs should be required to err on the side of safety. Others have suggested shortening the length of rounds, an idea that should be considered.

What we should not do is rob the sport of its edge and allure by completely protecting boxers from pain and risk. Asked about mandatory headgear, Tyson told *The Associated Press*: "We might as well ban boxing if that is the case. It's a fighters' sport. This is a hurt business."

Tyson is right. The prospect of hurt drives the popularity of boxing. The joy among true boxing aficionados in watching a match is not in seeing one fighter beat up on another, but in seeing the bobbing, the weaving, the moves that a fighter can use to prevent pain from being inflicted. Insert



**Tyson contra headgear: "We might as well ban boxing. It's a fighters' sport. This is a hurt business."**

headgear into the equation, and you remove much of the need for boxers to employ grace, speed, and reflexes in evading an opponent's attack. Believing that headgear can absorb blows, more boxers will stand their ground and slug it out, replacing the intricate footwork in professional bouts with the frantic, nonstop swinging of arms and fists that is the norm in many amateur matches where headgear is mandatory.

Once we start down the road of



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**Advertising and Marketing**

**Vice President, Sales:**

Jay H. Burzon

**Vice President, Marketing Services:**

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**New York: 212/687-1130**

Craig Vander Ploeg, Advertising Director

Robert C. Anastasia, Senior Account Manager

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**Chicago: 708/491-6440**

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**Inside Sports Broadcasting**

Douglas Carleton, Director of Affiliate Relations

**Detroit: 810/643-7240**

Ron Noyd

**Los Angeles: 310/820-2080**

Robert D. Johnson

**Business & Editorial Office:** Inside Sports,

990 Grove St., Evanston, IL 60201-4370,

708/491-6440

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Box 346, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0346

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outfitting fighters for protection, where do we stop? In addition to headgear, should we make boxers wear cushioned waist wraps to ensure that a spleen or liver doesn't get damaged by a blow? How about chest padding to keep the ribs from being cracked by a punch? Once we begin outfitting boxers with body armor, we might just as well have them fight each other by proxy, with Rock 'em, Sock 'em Robots. It would be about as exciting.

It is all but pointless to dress a boxer up in this little piece of head padding. Such organizations as USA Boxing and the New York State Athletic Commission have looked closely at the viability of headgear in the boxing ring, but no conclusive studies have emerged that show headgear will do anything to prevent serious head injuries. Why don't you hear more boxers forming a chorus to call for such protection? Because they know what life is really like in the ring once the bell sounds. They know that headgear becomes useless as protection against injury.

In fact, headgear may exacerbate the danger. For one thing, it may encourage a false sense of security. A fighter may let a punch he would otherwise block or duck get through in the belief that the headgear will absorb all the impact. It doesn't. The medical commission of the International Amateur Boxing Federation has studied the issue, reviewing the matches of 480 amateur boxers who wore headgear. The study found that the gear did not reduce the number of knockouts, which indicates that it is ineffective in preventing concussions or the bruises of the brain known as subdural hematomas.

In fact, headgear makes a boxer's head a bigger target, easier to hit. And because headgear absorbs sweat, it can make the boxer's head heavier and more difficult to move quickly. That can increase the possibility of brain injury. Headgear also restricts peripheral vision, limiting the fighter's view to a tunnel before him and leaving him vulnerable to a hard hook or other blow from the side.

The alternatives in this debate are quite clear. We can make ourselves feel a lot better by forcing boxers to cover their heads. In so doing, we clear our consciences by telling ourselves we have helped protect people who would otherwise neglect to protect themselves. In reality, though, if headgear becomes mandatory, we won't

have done a darn thing to protect professional boxers from serious head injuries—but we will have robbed the sport of much of its allure, which draws poor kids to use their abilities to earn a good living and gain a better life for themselves.

Football provides an example of how an inherently violent sport can inflict physical harm no matter how much protection the athlete is outfitted with. Football players are dressed in ample padding and state-of-the-art protective plastics. Yet in recent years offensive lineman Mike Utley of the Detroit Lions and defensive lineman Dennis Byrd of the New York Jets suffered paralysis as a result of game action, and former New England Patriots receiver Darryl Stingley is bound to a wheelchair as a result of a devastating hit he received in a preseason game with the Oakland Raiders in 1978.

The Nevada State Athletic Commission is studying new ways to reduce boxing deaths and injuries, including a look at the impact of weight loss before a fight. Some in the industry, including promoter Bob Arum, suggest that fighters who take diuretics in order to shed pounds to meet their weight limit aren't able to replenish the fluids in their brain before the fight. Indeed, it's interesting to note that the majority of serious head injuries occur among lighter boxers who have had to get below weight ceilings. There are few head injuries among heavyweight fighters—in fact, a heavyweight hasn't died from injuries suffered in a bout in more than 60 years.

Fighters are grown men who have chosen a profession that carries with it an element of danger. They have the right to make that choice, and it is not society's place to act as their parents. If you don't like boxing, you can try to get it and every other risky sport in this country banned. In the meantime, let the fighters fight without Big Brother telling them what to wear in the ring. Spending the time and effort to study ways in which unnecessary risks can be reduced or eliminated makes more sense than sticking some kind of pseudohelmet on a boxer's head and patting ourselves on our collective back that we have made boxing better and safer. ■

STEDMAN GRAHAM's commentary on sports and society appears regularly.



## Law

# The Pay's the Thing

DUKE BASKETBALL COACH Mike Krzyzewski earns hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary and a reported \$375,000 a year from a shoe company. Pete Gaudet—the man who took over as interim coach of the Blue Devils last January after a bad back and

exhaustion forced Coach K to call it a season—was paid a mere \$16,000 for his labors.

If you think that's absurd, you're not alone. Some 275 coaches are involved in a lawsuit against the NCAA to reverse a little-publicized and legally dubious NCAA regulation that severely limits the salaries of certain college assistants. So far, the coaches are winning their case.

The NCAA rule, which went into effect in 1992, allowed Division I schools to hire a head coach, two full-time assistants, and one additional coach: the so-called "restricted earnings coach." That coach could not earn more than \$12,000 in salary and an additional

\$4,000 for summer employment. NCAA bylaws also sharply limited benefits, expense allowances, and the length of time those coaches can serve. The rule covered not just basketball coaches, but between 100 and 200 coaches in baseball and other sports.

The NCAA justified the rule as a cost-saving measure and a means of complying with Title IX, the federal statute that calls for equality between women's and men's athletics programs. The head of the NCAA's Cost Reduction Committee, which drafted the rule, called it a "gigantic attempt to save intercollegiate athletics from itself."

The rule created a dilemma for a host of experienced assistants. Gaudet—a former head coach at Army and a highly respected assistant at Duke since 1983—faced the unenviable choice of scraping by on a paltry salary or leaving the program. He chose the former route; others, such as former Pittsburgh restricted earnings coach Norman Law, now are out of basketball.

The coaches challenged the rule in federal court, claiming that it violates the Sherman Antitrust Act by unlawfully fixing their salaries and limiting their freedom of movement within the profession. In the absence of such a rule, they claimed, the natural competitive forces of the marketplace would force schools to pay them their true worth.

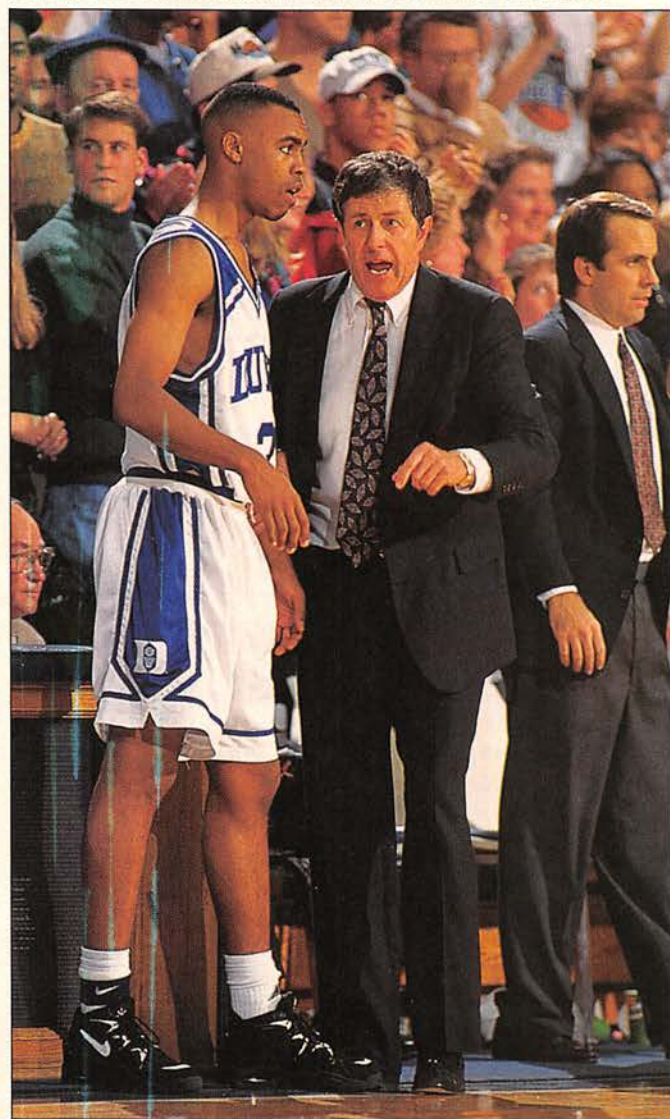
In its argument, the NCAA relied on a 1984 Supreme Court case that dealt with college football television rights. In that decision, the justices observed that intercollegiate athletics was a classic example of a business in which some cooperation among competitors is required, even though such combinations ordinarily would violate the antitrust laws. As the Supreme Court noted, "the integrity of the 'product' cannot be preserved except by mutual agreement" on such issues as player eligibility, amateurism, and game rules. Jack Kitchin, an attorney for the NCAA, likens the rule to limitations in recruiting and the elimination of athletic dorms, and calls it an acceptable "area of cost cutting."

Federal judge Katherine Vratil sided with the coaches. She agreed that the NCAA does have broad powers to regulate the conduct of college sports but deemed its argument in this case "wholly unconvincing." Vratil said the NCAA offered no compelling evidence to support its claim that member schools were "on the brink of disaster," and that unlike rules regulating play or recruiting standards, the limit on earnings was "commercial" in character. Noting that some coaches had been drawing salaries of \$60,000 to \$70,000 before being designated as restricted earnings coaches, the judge found that the rule was adopted expressly to cut costs and was therefore anticompetitive.

One competition that hasn't stopped is procedural wrangling in this case. After Vratil issued her ruling, the NCAA's administrative committee voted to suspend the rule's limitations on salaries—but it left the other provisions in place. Kitchin says that the NCAA reserves its rights to reinstate the rule, and the wording of the administrative committee's decision seems purposely ambiguous.

Dennis Cross, the lead attorney for the coaches, isn't satisfied with the NCAA's actions. "Our information is that the NCAA members are holding the line on compensation," he says. "Either collusion is taking place, which is just as unlawful as the rule itself, or the effects of the rule are lingering, and it will take a while for competition to return." Kitchin denies collusion and says that whatever a college does regarding coaches' salaries is an "individual decision." Gaudet has made his decision: He resigned as a Duke assistant before the ruling. Over the summer he worked at basketball camps at Chapel Hill and in Italy, where he made three times his monthly Duke coaching income.

The restricted earnings rule, originally adopted to save money, may wind up costing the NCAA plenty. The organization is seeking to appeal Vratil's order before a trial gets underway to determine how much money it must pay the coaches in damages. Gerald Roth, an attorney for some of those coaches, estimates that damages,





which are tripled under the antitrust laws, could amount to "between \$10 million and \$20 million." Now the NCAA must hope that a higher court will save it from an expensive payday.

—Linda J. Cohen

## Trends

### Ascent of a Woman

AIR SWOOPES, NIKE'S FIRST shoe named after a woman—basketball player Sheryl Swoopes—and only its second named after an athlete, hit stores October 1. If the performance of the pair this writer tried is any indication, the lives of many girls will never be the same.

Sisters, what would you say if I told you that Air Swoopes did things for my game that Air Jordans never have? Can you imagine, at a height closer to

Muggsy Bogues than Manute Bol, taking off from the free throw line, soaring to the rim, and dunking? Can you imagine a crossover dribble Tim Hardaway would envy? Can you imagine a five-second hang time?

Nike is promoting the \$85 black-and-white leather shoes with print ads, and there is talk of a television commercial. Robin Carr Locke, public relations manager for Nike's women's division, said that when the company first announced Air Swoopes in March, retailers began booking the shoes sight-unseen. Their enthusiasm probably was based more on the positive effect the words "Nike" and "Air" have on the psyche of the shoe-buying public than on knowledge of Swoopes' accomplishments—she led Texas Tech to the 1993 NCAA women's championship, holds numerous NCAA basketball records, and is a member of the U.S. women's national team that will compete in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta—but Nike

plans to change all that.

"Women's sports are coming into

their own," Carr Locke says. "TV ratings for the women's Final Four shot through the roof last year, and ESPN will be covering the entire NCAA women's basketball tournament next spring. It's been 20 years since the passage of Title IX—there's a whole gener-

ation of girls that has grown up playing sports.

"Why Sheryl? Simply put, we feel she is the female Michael Jordan."

It didn't hurt that she's blessed with the euphonious last name "Swoopes" instead of, say, "MacGillicutty."

In an effort to beef up its

**Nike hopes Air Swoopes will elevate its profile in the female market.**



PHOTO BY STEVE LEVIN

## Hobbies

### Breaking the Plane

IT'S THE LAST DAY OF 1994. Cheese heads and colorful stocking caps fill the frame at Green Bay's Lambeau Field. Packers quarterback Brett Favre, rolling right, spots an open receiver and fires a pass.

What's special about this clip from last season's Packers-Detroit Lions playoff game? It isn't video, and it isn't film. It's a sports trading card.

A technological revolution is firing up the trading card industry, which four years ago was unraveling at the seams and just a year ago was deeply hurt by the labor strife in professional sports. Trading card companies are responding to the cycles inherent to their industry by producing a barrage of eye-catching technologies intended to lure collectors back into the fold.

The progress goes beyond

improvements in color photography, computer design, and card stock. Advances in holography, lithography, and clear animation are evident in nearly every new issue. Terminology is becoming so unwieldy that one company, Pinnacle Brands, has created a glossary that explains terms such as "embossing," "morphing," "micro-etching," and "spectro-etching," and patented processes such as "Dufex" and "Magic Motion."

"The advances in the last four years amaze me," says Michael Cleary, Pinnacle's executive vice president. "My guess is the customer is absolutely shocked at the transition."

Three things immediately strike the consumer who forays into the new technocard jungle: (1) You've never seen cards like these before, (2) you'd better dig deeper into that wallet, and (3) good luck sorting things out.

The average retail price of a new foil pack of cards has shot from 50 cents in 1988 to nearly \$3 in 1995. These days it's hard to find an issue with a suggested

retail price of less than \$1. Pacific Trading Cards' Crown Collection/NFL Prisms offers a single card per \$1.99 pack.

The Favre card is an example of "SkyMotion," a process developed by SkyBox International that uses a number of biconvex lenses to combine multiple photographic images. By placing the card up to the light and moving it, the holder is greeted to a virtual film clip on paper. SkyBox introduced the process last spring with a SkyMotion basketball card that shows Detroit Pistons star Grant Hill performing a one-handed alley-oop dunk.

Don't expect to find such wizardry in every pack. SkyBox has placed the Favre card in just one in 360 packs. If you don't like those odds, you can send in \$25 and 10 SkyBox Impact wrappers for a Favre SkyMotion offering. Be forewarned, though: Favre will be running, not passing, on the mail-in version.

Pinnacle's Dufex process superimposes a player's image against a laminated foil background with UV-formulated trans-

parent inks. The results are dazzling foil reflections and an embossed texture. Dufex cards are printed in Europe and randomly seeded into foil packs of Pinnacle products. The process is so secret, Cleary says, that not even he is allowed into a certain part of the factory.

Upper Deck can counter with "Holoview," a process that synthesizes videotape to create a 50-degree three-dimensional image. You can see a player's expression change as you rotate the card under light. Upper Deck spokesman Rich Bradley calls it "the Mona Lisa of trading cards."

The revolution even has awakened Topps, the slumbering giant that enjoyed a virtual monopoly in cards until 1989. Topps lagged behind when the new wave of technology hit, but it now touts "DIII," a three-dimensional process, and "TMB," in which both sides of the card are embossed.

Topps also brought back possibly the only substance you'll recognize if you've been away from the hobby for a while: gum.

—James E. Smith



women's division, Nike began working with focus groups composed of female high school and college athletes in 1993. "We found that there is a perception that Nike is a men's company," Carr Locke says, "and to the extent that our advertising and promotions have been male-dominated, it's true." Air Swoopes is Nike's first step in an effort to change that perception. The company has signed five other women basketball players—all members of the national team—and plans to aggressively market its women's basketball shoe line.

"The biggest complaint among the girls in our focus groups was that they didn't like the colors of our women's line," Carr Locke says. "They'd go over to the boys' section to get the tough, aggressive-looking shoes that they wanted." She also mentions a certain public perception that needs to be addressed: "We'll do our part to help society understand that girls playing sports is cool."

Now for a confession. In truth, even wearing Air Swoopes, I still couldn't jam from the free throw line or beat Hardaway off the dribble. I did find I could shoot free throws better than Shaquille O'Neal—then I tried free throws barefoot, blindfolded, and with one hand tied behind my back, and found I *still* could hit from the line better than Shaq. Guess it wasn't the shoes.

But wearing Air Swoopes allowed me to dream. Sure, it's only a pair of shoes, and in my fantasies I still found myself using guys as my standard of excellence. But hey—it's a start. Soon, when they're on the court, little girls everywhere may be emulating Sheryl instead of Michael.

Can you imagine that? Now they can.—Carol Slezak

## Update

### Can't Lose for Winning

VINCE LOMBARDI'S HATRED OF losing is legendary. However, even Lombardi would have loved Louis Herman "Red" Klotz. How could he feel anything but admiration for a guy who lost 8,500 consecu-

tive basketball games but always brushed himself off and came back for more?

After 43 years as player, coach, and owner of the Washington Generals, Klotz has closed his team's camp and brought to a merciful end its stunningly long line of defeat. The Generals, for nearly a half-century the fall guys for the famed Harlem Globetrotters, have lost their last game.

Klotz isn't through losing just yet, though. Get ready for his newest creation: the International All-Stars.

"We've put the Generals in mothballs and moved on to bigger and better ideas," says Klotz, who turns 74 in October. "Having the worst record in all of sports history with the Generals, we decided to move into something more exciting and challenging."

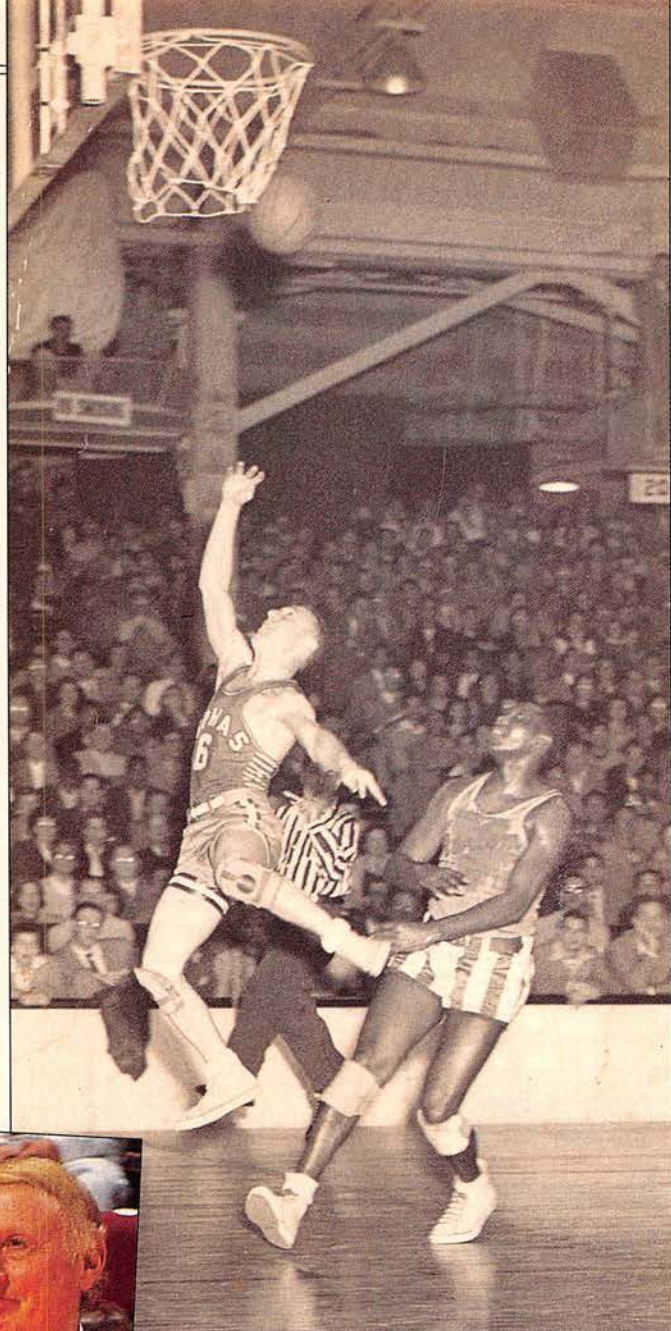
Klotz is forming his new team at the behest of Globetrotters owner Mannie Jackson, a former Trotter who enjoyed, oh, 400 or so wins over the Generals during his brief playing stint in 1961 and '62. "Mannie is trying to make the games more competitive," Klotz says. "He wants me to come up with a tough team of international stars, one that appeals to a world audience and has a shot to beat the Globetrotters on any given night."

Surprisingly, Klotz sounds entirely serious. Of course, he sounds no different when he claims that the Generals set out to win every one of their games. "My teams always knew how to play solid basketball," he says. "People came to see the Globetrotters; playing solid basketball was our job."

"The game has to be very competitive. We never went out to lose, but to try to win—and one time, we did just that."

Ah, yes. The Win. Before that pesky 8,500-game skid. Twenty-four years ago in Martin, Tenn., Klotz sank a 20-footer at the buzzer, and the Globetrotters—gulp—lost 100-99.

"Like killing Santa Claus," Klotz says without a trace of remorse. "Oh, yeah, the audience was terribly upset—they booed us pretty bad. And the Globetrotters were upset because we



**Klotz played the straight man for years, but behind the goofing was some serious hoops talent.**

killed the show."

That win may have allowed Klotz to stomach all the losses that sandwiched it. Truth be told, we're talking about one very good basketball player here. Yes, the role of loser has served Klotz quite well—a Generals regular until the age of 62, he's the one everyone remembers: the balding, 5'7", too-small-and-old-to-be-out-there guy whose head was kissed, whose shorts were yanked down, whose goat was gotten every time he stepped onto the court. But he could play; he was a terror growing up on the playgrounds of South Philadelphia and a star at Villanova, and he played on the 1948 NBA champion Baltimore Bullets. With his classic two-hand-

ed set shot, Klotz led the Generals in scoring year after year.

"Oh, man, Red was awesome," says popular Globetrotter Geese Ausbie, the man who planted those smooches on Klotz's dome. "I'm telling you, right now Red could go out there and beat any NBA player from behind the three-point line. He'll hit 18 out of 20 any night. It's true: He's still in shape, and every time I see him he's either got gym shoes and shorts on, or he's got them in the trunk of his car."

"I don't think the losing bothered Red too much. He always played hard—and hey, he beat us that one time. He may have lost a lot, but he'll always be a winner in my heart."—Steve Greenberg



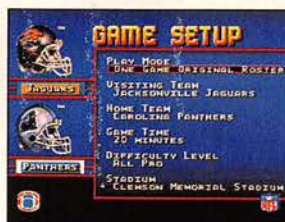


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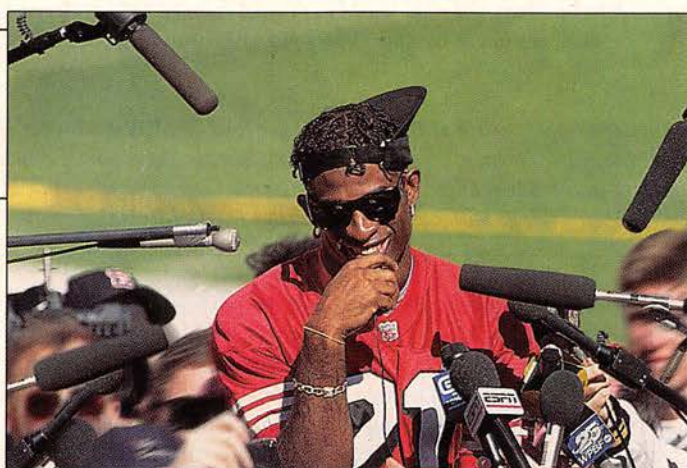
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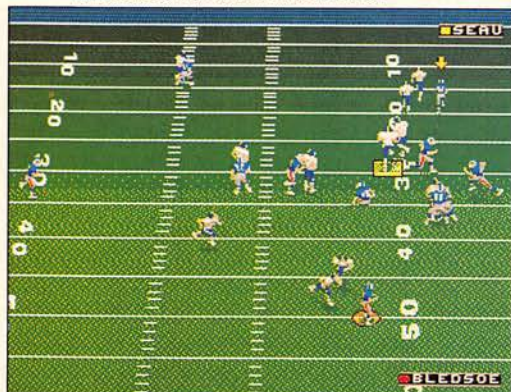


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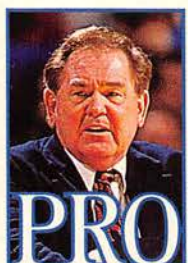
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## Has Hakeem Olajuwon supplanted Michael Jordan as the best basketball player in the world?

AS THE CHICAGO BULLS CELEBRATED THEIR THIRD STRAIGHT NBA CHAMPIONSHIP in June 1993, no sensible person would have denied that Michael Jordan was the world's best basketball player. But then Jordan left hoops to chase his field of dreams, and in his absence Houston Rockets center Hakeem Olajuwon made a strong claim to the title of world's best. When Jordan returned to the NBA at the end of the 1994-95 season, he looked somewhat vulnerable; Olajuwon, meanwhile, outplayed '94-95 MVP David Robinson and Shaquille O'Neal while carrying the Rockets to an unexpected second consecutive NBA crown. For the first time since Jordan, Magic Johnson, and Larry Bird roamed the hardwood together, the question of the sport's best player is open to debate.



BRIAN SPURLOCK

Los Angeles Clippers coach **Bill Fitch**, who coached Olajuwon with the Houston Rockets in the mid-'80s, lines up behind Hakeem. Seattle SuperSonics coach **George Karl**, like Jordan a product of the University of North Carolina, sides with MJ. The two spoke with contributing writer DAVID MOORE.



BOB ROSATO

**Karl:** When you say the best player, you're talking more about an individual emphasis. I look at Michael as a dynamic passer who can play point guard and is a fantastic scorer. He also is a great ball defender and a great team defender. When you just focus on one player, he probably has more ability to dominate a game in more areas than Hakeem.

The one thing that solidified Michael's greatness was the ability to make the three-point shot. That's the one weakness he had, and he eliminated that in the past couple of years.

**Fitch:** Superstardom is always "What have you done for me lately?" Olajuwon has done it lately. Now the big question is whether Michael can come all the way back. If you crown a king now, it would have to be Olajuwon. He has the last two championship trophies, and he has great stats that will stand up with Jordan's.

Michael went through this, and it's always there: Do you make those around you better? Hakeem took a group of guys and helped them reach their potential and fit into a

championship scheme. It was the epitome of making other players better. I've seen Hakeem grow up from a guy who was not always thinking of the team first—at one time, he operated on the philosophy that if he made 45% of his shots against a double-team and 60% against one guy, why should he throw it out to someone who isn't shooting even 35%? He realizes now you've got to make that pass.

Hakeem reads pressure; he has a great knack for head fakes and for getting away from pressure to get the shot off. He really makes the right reads. Early in his career that was a problem.

**Karl:** You have to marvel at Jordan's ability to score through, over, and around double-teams. I do think the perimeter player is more difficult to double than the post player; the player who plays off the dribble has a little more of an advantage of seeing the double-team coming. He sees the passing angles and knows how to crack them better than the post player—when you double

on the perimeter, you leave some big holes. However, Michael can actually score against triple-teams.

Both players are able to dominate with their defensive instincts. Hakeem does it through shot-blocking; Michael does it by stopping the ball and taking his guy out of the play. Michael has great team and individual strengths as a defender, where I view Hakeem as a great team defender.

I think the one team area in which Hakeem dominates Michael is rebounding. In a playoff structure, that's an outstanding statistic. But Michael is a great rebounder for his position.

**Fitch:** What Hakeem did in the playoffs in those last three games against the Utah Jazz, and against David Robinson and the San Antonio Spurs in the Western Conference finals, was just outstanding. Robinson is a great player, and he had a great season. It's pretty hard for a guy to take his game to another level against a player that good, but that's what Hakeem did: He

literally took it to another level. It was not so much that he brought the Admiral down. He just jumped up and made it look easy.

Early in his career Hakeem would do a lot with his back to the bucket. He would fade to the baseline. Now he can also come out and face up. From 17 feet in, he may be the best shooter in basketball. The fact that he can go outside and face up makes him that much tougher. In the last two to three minutes, he knows he can set up the shot for himself or someone else. And he wants the ball in that situation. He's not shy.

Hakeem used to renegotiate more contracts than any agent in the world, but he has grown up to be the leading example of what a player should be in this league. If you pick a person for what he has done on the court, one who has not overcommercialized himself, he's an outstanding person to emulate.

**Karl:** The truth is, the reason we're talking about this is because Michael made a few mistakes late in games during



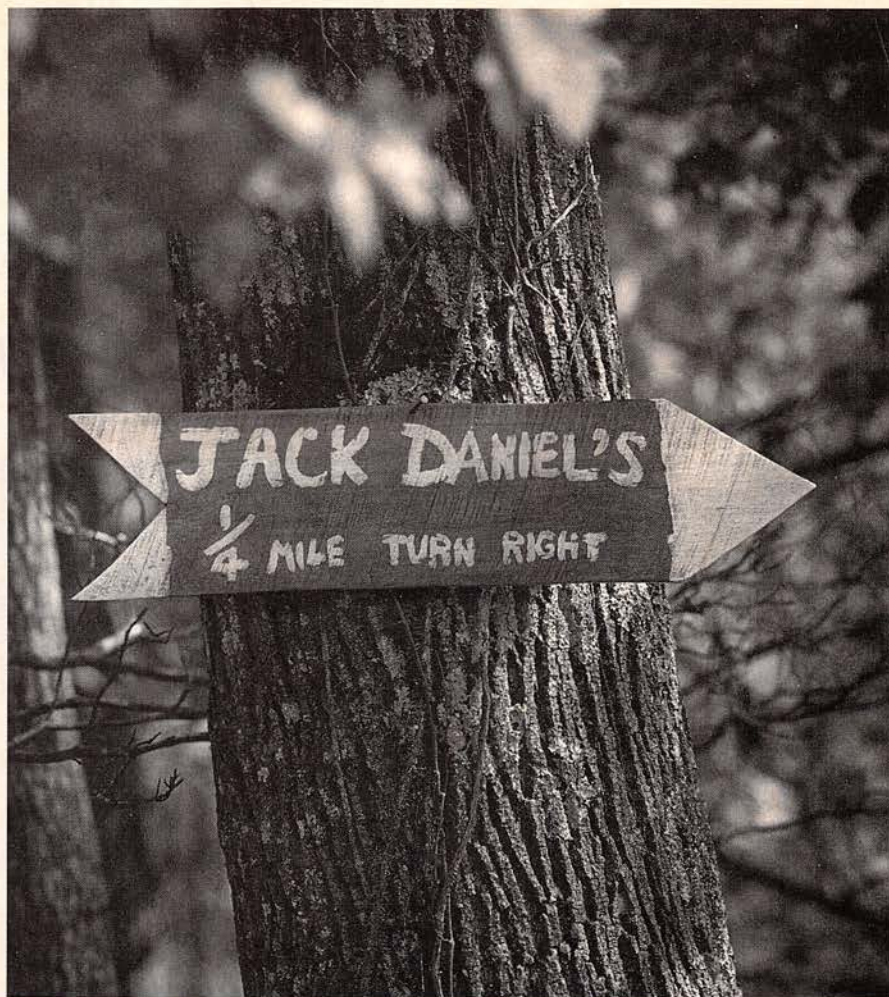
the Bulls' semifinal playoff series loss to Orlando. There *was* a little lack of polish to Michael's game when he came back to basketball, but that will return. As far as lacking the lift he had earlier in his career, that's natural—but he has added so much more to his game.

Hakeem delivers, and he's the best low-box player in the last five minutes of the game, but Michael still is ahead of Hakeem in winning big games, and he's ahead with one more championship. I think that's what we're talking about here: the ability to win big games and to carry a team in many ways to a championship season. Michael has the edge there. He has three championships; Hakeem has won two. If Charles Barkley had won one and Shaq had won one since the Bulls' run, we wouldn't even be having this discussion—Michael would still be considered the best. But I'm happy for Hakeem. He deserves this attention.

**Fitch:** Hakeem is a center, and all things being equal, you always have to go with the big man. He plays hard every night, and he practices hard every day. I always said that talentwise, he could take it to another level, and if he did he'd be mentioned with the immortals. The fact that we're sitting here comparing him with Jordan, the fact that we mention Bird and Magic in the same voice—that's as high as you can go.

A lot of this is how you handle stardom. You still have to enjoy the game. I think both of these guys still enjoy the game. Olajuwon has been able to keep things in perspective through his Islamic faith. He's exemplary. There's no better role model around. That's one reason he is so effective with his teammates. If you're not doing it—if you're not making the proper play—he'll let you know about it. He's got a little coach in him.

Olajuwon and Jordan are two great ones, but Hakeem is on a roll, and you go with the guy on a roll. Besides, if you need a tie-breaker, Olajuwon was a better soccer player than Jordan was a baseball player. ■



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By RICHARD TORRES

# Breaking Into the Boys' Club

ESPN WORLD HEADQUARTERS, incongruously situated in bucolic Bristol, Conn., is a beehive of activity. Interns hustle their way through a maze of hallways lined with monitors; news and production staffers busily prepare for the evening's broadcasts. Robin Roberts, one of the three anchors for the 6:30 "SportsCenter," is the calm amidst the storm. Tall, elegant, and unruffled, she is preternaturally at ease on camera and off.

Roberts has good reason to be. In June she signed a six-year deal for a reported \$3.9 million with ESPN and its corporate sister, ABC, that grants her wide latitude. She'll host ABC's long-running "Wide World of Sports" in addition to "SportsCenter." She'll do play-by-play for women's and men's college basketball, as well as golf and tennis. She'll play a primary role in ESPN's coverage of the 1996 Summer Olympics and the 1998 Winter Olympics. She'll work college and pro football. In short, Roberts, who turns 35 later this year, is boldly going where no woman has gone before.

When you set out on that kind of trek, it helps to know where you want to go. "To be a good sportscaster, you've had to be one of those kids who slept with your glove," says media consultant Andrea Kirby, whose own sportscasting career began in Sarasota, Fla., in 1971. "Robin Roberts has been sleeping with her glove since she was born, and it shows. You can't fake that enthusiasm."

Roberts was a superb athlete, and she decided to use her basketball talent as a springboard to a career in sports journalism. "I was a natural power forward," Roberts says. "But in high school in Mississippi, standing 5'10"—which was considered tall in the late '70s—I was always the center. I knew that to get a college scholarship, no one wanted a 5'10" post player. I had to face the goal. So in my



*Robin Roberts and other women are proving that in the world of sports broadcasting, knowledge, experience, and talent no longer are male preserves.*

senior year I never ate lunch." Instead, she worked tirelessly on her outside shot.

Roberts was accepted at Southeastern Louisiana University—where she ended up playing center after all. When her college career ended, she was third all-time in scoring and rebounding for the school, with 1,446 points and 1,034 boards. She graduated cum laude with a degree in communications—and with her first taste of broadcasting, as the sports director for WHMD/WFPR radio.

"My oldest sister, Sally Ann Roberts, a news anchor in New Orleans, is my mentor," Roberts says. "She'd tell me I'd needed more than a degree—I needed experience and a job." Roberts got both. "I banged on the door of the local radio station. I asked to be sports director. It was a country music station. They said, 'Great, but you have to deejay on the weekends.' So I did."

A plan was well in motion. "I thought I'd go to 'X' size market for one to two years, then to a medium-size market. By Year 7 I'd be at ESPN, then, eventually, a network." Roberts' blueprint for success was eerily prophetic. After her graduation in 1983, she breezed through radio and television stints as sports anchor in Hattiesburg, Miss., Biloxi, Miss., Nashville, and Atlanta, before joining ESPN in February 1990.

Roberts certainly picked the right place for advancement. While the big three networks had been using women reporters since the early '70s—Kirby cites such pioneers as CBS's Jane Chastain—ESPN was the first national network to hire women for anchor positions.

"They are the exception," says Lynn Zinser, a sportswriter for the *Philadelphia Daily News* and a board member of the Association for Women in Sports Media. "ESPN has been more willing to try people. Only after they've been out on the air will the networks use them. It seems that ESPN trains them, then the networks take them away."

Today female sportscasters are a common sight on the Big Three. Sideline and feature reporters such as Hannah Storm of NBC, Andrea Joyce of CBS, and Lesley Visser of ABC are familiar to viewers. Because so many outlets broadcast such a diverse slate of games and events, many women analysts—Mary Cirillo in tennis, for example—leapfrog among networks to provide color commentary.

Women also are slowly making inroads into one of sportscasting's last male bastions: play-by-play. Last summer Susan Waldman called a game for the Baseball Network. Has the final door been broken down?

"First, women have to be accepted as knowing something about sports," Zinser says. "This is where newspapers have





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made greater progress than television. Women sportswriters are on staff in most major markets.

"In TV on the local level, the situation is absolutely pathetic. As for play-by-play, maybe soon [it'll be a staple], but unfortunately there are so few women on that local level to get into that feeder system to the major markets."

"I love doing play-by-play," Roberts says. She considers the Connecticut/Tennessee women's basketball game she covered last January to be one of her broadcasting high points. "No. 1 vs. No. 2. [UConn's] Gampel Pavilion is packed; millions of viewers are watching. As a woman who played basketball, I almost had tears in my eyes knowing that people are seeing this fast-paced, up-and-down cliffhanger of a game. I caught myself forgetting I'm a broadcaster and getting caught up in what I was seeing. Play-by-play gives exciting, immediate gratification."

Now it's time to step up to men's sports. "This year on ABC, I'll be doing play-by-play for college basketball," Roberts says. "I'm looking forward to it—eventually, I'd love to do NBA games. I've also been approached for college football. It's intriguing."

"I remember the first time I heard Gayle Sierens, who did a Kansas City vs. Denver game for NBC in the '80s. I thought, 'That's weird.' Now, there weren't any mistakes; she did a fine job, and her voice wasn't distracting—

but it was odd to hear a woman's voice saying, 'third-and-10.' When women step into sports we don't play, people have a problem with it. That's a big barrier to overcome."

Women sportscasters, at least for now, also must maintain a balance of femininity. "I'm very aware of it," Roberts says. "You can't be *too* beautiful or *too* sexy, but you have to be attractive. It's a double-edged sword. Sometimes I get a little angry about it because I know that in regard to my male counterparts, it doesn't matter. They can be overweight, bespectacled, not considered handsome, and it will not matter how people look at them. But it's a part of society. It's no different than if you're working at IBM. It's part of things women have to face."

"I'm secure enough not to be bothered by it, but as I get older and more into journalism and making a difference, I get angri-

er and want to say: 'Listen to me. Don't look at me—listen to what I'm saying.' That's one reason I think I'll go back to radio: People listen—they don't care what you look like."

Like other female sports journalists, Roberts must combat the unfortunate legacy of Phyllis George. A former Miss America, George broke new ground when she joined CBS's pregame show in the '70s. She later was replaced by Jayne Kennedy. Neither was hired for her football acumen. "People often ask: Did they help or hurt?" Roberts says. "They helped in that we had a point of reference. We're able to say, 'Remember back in the '70s?' Kennedy and George did what was expected of them. They weren't supposed to know the Dallas Cowboys' defense—they were supposed to know the Dallas Cowboys' wives. For what they were expected to do, they did an admirable, difficult job. But that would not fly today."

You might think Roberts' path was doubly difficult given that she is a woman and black. Her view: "I'd have to say people see

**Sports is a man's world, so people see gender. But I was prepared, and I'm reaping the benefits.**  
—Robin Roberts



me first as a woman doing sports. Because sports is a man's world, they see gender first. The fact that I'm black plays into it down the road.

"Basically, I'd feel like a hypocrite if I said, 'You know, it's been hard.' Look at what I've done. Look at the contract I've just signed. I'm very blessed and fortunate. I was around people who allowed me an opportunity. But I was prepared, and now I'm reaping the benefits. I'd also be naive if I didn't say there were assignments I felt I was ready for that I didn't get. It could have been youth. I've never allowed myself to see that 'ism,' be it racism or sexism."

Roberts participates in many mentor programs. "When young black women call me, I know it's going to be difficult for them," she says. "I'm just glad I can share some of my experiences. Recently, 80

young black women from a New Haven camp, aged six to 17, came to ESPN. I gave a talk in the studio. I looked into this sea of faces. Some of them didn't care about sports, but they did care about the fact that here was a black woman who is succeeding in life. They were saying to themselves, 'I also want to succeed. I may not want to be a sportscaster, but to be able to carry myself like that and do those things.' When you see those young people looking for advice—well, that's pretty heady stuff."

If Roberts is a role model, she also had some great ones: Her father was a Tuskegee Airman, a member of the distinguished squadron of black pilots that flew in World War II, and he rose to the rank of colonel in the Air Force. Her mother was the first in her family to receive an education, and later she became chairperson of the board of education for the state of Mississippi.

"Everywhere my parents have gone, they've been the first, first, first, first," Roberts says. "So I come from a long line of trailblazers. Of that, I'm very proud. The fact that I'm a black woman doing sports is nothing compared with what my ancestors have done. The least I can do to honor them is fulfill the dream I have."

More and more women sportscasters are fulfilling theirs, and they are mutually supportive. "Lesley Visser was one of the first people to call me when I signed my new contract," Roberts says. "She told me, 'You go, girl.' I have so many letters from women telling me, 'Go, girl.' From the Women's Sports foundation to [ESPN's] Andrea Kremer, we're a sorority. We're very tight. We help each other. It doesn't matter if we aren't on the same network."

"It's different from my male counterparts. It's not cutthroat competition. We know if we do well, everyone will benefit—just like, right or wrong, if one of us women makes a mistake we all are going to be labeled. So we all try to do well."

Now she's signed until the year 2001, and she's looking forward to new challenges. "My dream is to be an Olympic host," says Roberts, who anchored ESPN's Barcelona coverage and will do the same in Atlanta. "I'd also like to be mentioned in the same breath with Chris Berman and Bob Costas."

"I don't want to be an answer to a trivia question. I want to have longevity and a positive influence, to continue to evolve and grow. I want people to tune in a major sporting event and have me there hosting it—no big deal. Just pop open a cold one of your favorite beverage. Robin's there; so what? That's the highest compliment to me." ■





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**R**ANDALL CUNNINGHAM STRETCHES his 6'4" frame onto a couch in the Philadelphia Eagles press room and puts his hands behind his head. Looking up at his inquisitor, he smiles. "OK, I'm the patient and you're the psychiatrist," he says. "Go ahead."

A daunting but tempting prospect. Plenty of people would like to poke around inside Cunningham's head, find out what makes him tick. Now in his 11th NFL season, the three-time Pro Bowl quarterback can be as elusive off the field as he is on it: Just when you think you have him, you find out you don't. He's infamous among Philadelphia-area media for contradicting

understand me." It's why some people think Cunningham is as scatterbrained as he is strong-armed. He says people would know otherwise if only they knew the real Randall Cunningham. The problem is, he doesn't let many people see the real Randall Cunningham.

Eagles fans are more interested in seeing the real Cunningham on the football field. They're just not sure which one to expect: the quarterback who is scrambling or the one who is scrambled up. Cunningham has run for more yardage than any other quarterback in NFL history, but he also missed almost all of the 1991 and 1993 seasons because of leg injuries. Despite his breathtaking skills, he has led the Eagles to just one playoff victory. He's been MVP of the Pro Bowl, and he's been

is just fine, thank you. He has a new coach and a new outlook, and he's convinced the two will help him once again be one of the NFL's top quarterbacks—a player so unique that fans hesitate to leave their seats when he's on the field for fear they'll miss a play they've never seen before and never will again.

**INSIDE SPORTS:** After last season, when you were benched for the last two games and the Eagles lost their last seven, are you surprised still to be in Philadelphia?

**RANDALL CUNNINGHAM:** You want to know the crazy thing? If I had left here, I'd probably have gotten a \$4 million signing bonus and a \$1.7 million salary, so I'd have made more money than I'll make this year. But that wasn't my destiny. My destiny was to be on the team I'd be happy playing with.

Last year people wrote me off, but in California, Raiders fans were saying, "Come out here! Come out here!" Arizona fans said, "Come out here! Come out here!" That's all I heard this offseason. They were happy at the thought I wasn't going to be playing for Philadelphia, that I could come and play for them.

**IS:** You made no effort to hide your displeasure when Rich Kotite benched you last year in favor of Bubby Brister, in effect making you a scapegoat for the losing streak. How did that affect you?

**RC:** I lost a lot of confidence, but I think we as a team lost confidence. That's what hurt so much—that we lost confidence in who was controlling us. That's bad, when players lose confidence in the guy at the top. Now it's different, because coach Rhodes controls things and covers all aspects. He's a winner—he knows *how* to win, and it's such a difference.

**IS:** When did you suspect you were going to be benched?

**RC:** I knew before the season started what was going to happen. I didn't want to believe it, but I knew going into it, when I was receiving fewer reps in practice. You know, "Well, we've got to get Bubby ready to play." What? OK, I understand he might have to play if I get hurt or something, but I'm trying to go out and be successful, so can you give me more reps so I can be ready?

We all read through it, as players. I just said, "Aw, man, what do we have to go through this for? We're doing fine. Let us win two more games and get into the play-

*Randall Cunningham*

# An Earful From Philly

***Is the Eagles quarterback an enigma? Let the man himself tell you why he is, and why he isn't, and why no one knows the real him but him***

**By KEVIN NOONAN**

himself, sometimes in the same sentence. On occasion he'll start to make a succinct point about an important issue, then drift off on some obscure tangent.

Cunningham realizes he's a conundrum, but he can't help it. "I know sometimes I say things in the wrong way," he says. "It's something I'm guilty of. That's one of my faults."

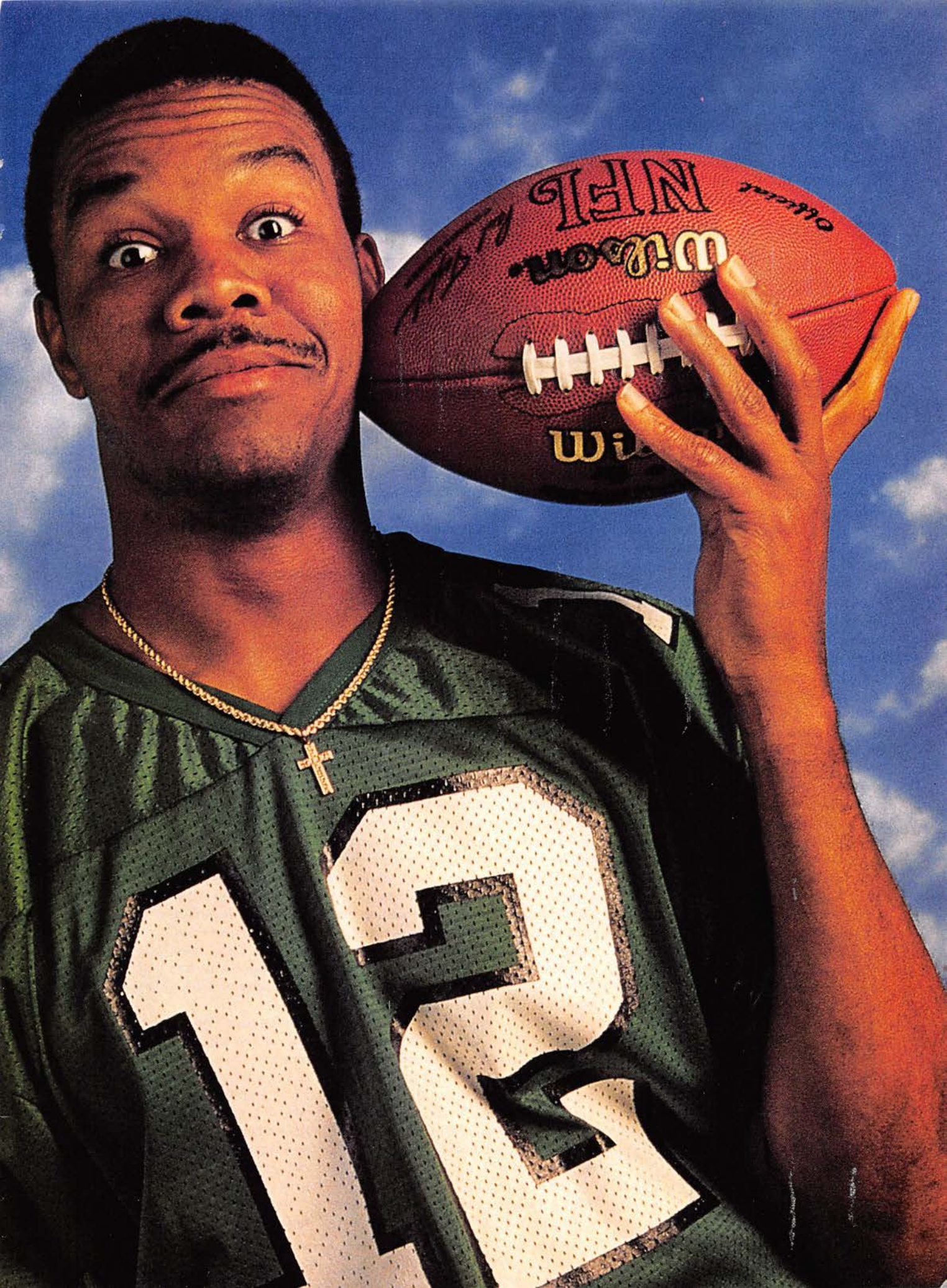
"A lot of people don't understand it, which is why I don't get as frustrated about people who don't understand me. But I'm not an enigma, I'm not anybody difficult. But I can understand why people don't

benched. Now nobody is sure which Cunningham is the real deal.

When the team announced it would run a 49ers-style "West Coast" attack this season under new coach Ray Rhodes and offensive coordinator Jon Gruden, Cunningham's detractors doubted his ability to adjust. His boosters, though, exchanged high fives at the very thought of their man freed from conservative coaches, finally surrounded by a system that suits his many talents.

Time will tell. Cunningham's future in Philly still may be in doubt, but the present







offs, and we can change the whole thing around." We didn't get to that. The finger got pointed at Antone Davis and Broderick Thompson [two offensive linemen who also were benched] and me.

**IS:** You're excited about Jon Gruden, your offensive coordinator this season.

Why are you so impressed with him?

**RC:** I know he's

me up on this pedestal. For some of the critics, it's like Tball: They put me up on this thing, then they want to swing and knock me down.

**IS:** You've also been criticized for caring too much about your television show and other outside interests, and not enough about football.

**RC:** That's what hurt me in the past. I've had so much love inside for the game and for my teammates, but sometimes in the

go to Benihana"—we'll go to Benihana five times in one week, and we'll all show up together and all crack on each other and bust up on each other. That's a side of me that people don't really see.

**IS:** Why don't you let them see it?

**RC:** Because they're going to be judgmental.

**IS:** But they're going to be judgmental anyway. Why not let them judge you on who you really are?

**RC:** You know when people get to see me? At my TV show. When they come to my TV show, I'm me. During the breaks I'm cracking on people, and we're having fun. I like doing stuff like that, to show them, "Look, I'm a normal dude," you know?

I like to have fun. I can sit here and talk to you all day, and you might get the opportunity to know me as a person, because you'd open your heart and try to understand me. Forget the judgments you've made, how you think I am, and just listen to me and understand I'm not trying to put one over on you. It's just me, the way I am.

**IS:** You were one of the first successful

black quarterbacks in the NFL, after Joe Gilliam and Doug Williams. Did you guys make it easier for someone like Steve McNair?

**RC:** I'll put it this way: Things have changed; people are just accepting great talent. It's become more realistic. It's not even a big thing anymore. People still

think about it, but it's more realistic now to realize that the best quarterbacks or the best players are going to be picked. There was no way Steve McNair could not have been a top draft pick—the guy's just too talented. The top guys are going to get the opportunity, regardless of color.

**IS:** Among quarterbacks, only Dan Marino and John Elway have longer tenures with the same team than you. How has the league changed since you were a rookie in 1985?

**RC:** It's been crazy, man. You know what one of the biggest changes is? I can remember when there was a lot of solidarity. Guys wanted to stay on the same team. Now the attitude is, "I've got to have a good year so I can go play for so-and-so, because that's where I want to be. I'm from Florida, so I want to play for Miami." Or, "Man, I can get a \$4.5 million signing bonus to go to New Orleans or Arizona."

You see guys offered a certain amount of money—say, \$2 million—and if they get



AL PEREIRA

*"Last year we lost confidence in Kotite, in who was controlling us."*

going to make me a better quarterback. Sometimes things aren't as good as we'd like them to be, and he's not going to get down on me. He's going to say, "I'm with you, big guy." And that's what you need. It doesn't matter if you're Drew Bledsoe or Brett Favre, we're going to make mistakes as quarterbacks. There are going to be times when we're going to be 0-for-5 or 0-for-3 or 0-for-4 on third down, in key situations. But he's going to stick in my corner, and that makes a big difference, because when you know you've got somebody in your corner that monkey can't jump on your back—there's somebody knocking the monkey off your back.

**IS:** After a decade in Philly, you've heard it all from the fans. Why do you think they cheer you, and why do they boo you?

**RC:** I haven't really been booed a lot. I think the reason they cheer is because of the excitement and the success I've brought to the game. I think they boo me because so much is said about me that people get sick of hearing about Randall Cunningham. You know, "Ah, forget Randall Cunningham. What about Ricky Watters? Let's talk about Ricky Watters." And so many people are opinionated. It's just a lot of controversy that gets started. I know somebody said if a certain station [WIP, an all-sports radio station in Philadelphia] didn't talk about me, their ratings would drop. If that's how much I'm talked about in town, that's crazy.

**IS:** Well, you're the quarterback in a football-crazy town.

**RC:** It's just amazing how people have put

past I was looked at like, "Man, all he cares about is Arsenio Hall and Eric Dickerson and making money and going to the Emmys." I was invited to do those things, and I happened to talk about them because I was so thankful.

But I've learned to not even get involved, as far as talking about this stuff. People look at me like I

*"Rhodes is a winner—he knows how to win, and it's such a difference."*

put myself on a pedestal when I do that. But you'd be the same way. If somebody invites you to go to the Super Bowl and sit with Joe Namath and all the guys who have been MVP of the Super Bowl, you're not going to turn that down. But when you get back with the boys and you're sharing your good times with them, some of them are going to have some animosity, because they didn't.

**IS:** Is it jealousy?

**RC:** I don't know if jealousy is the right word, but some people are...judgmental. But that's in the past. The guys are cool now. You have so many different personalities in the game, you can't expect somebody to think the way you think. We're all different, so we have to do things in different ways. And sometimes that's when things get a little messed up.

**IS:** When and with whom do you allow the real you to come out?

**RC:** I get together with my friends. We're like a family. I call them up and say, "Let's



ED MARIAN PHOTO

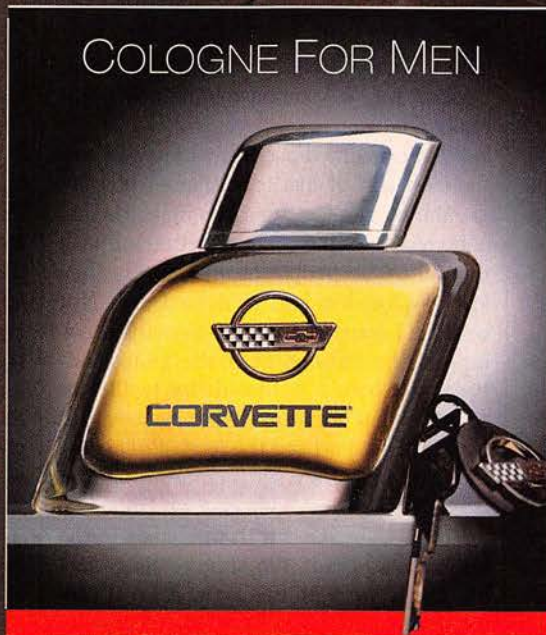


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hurt, all of a sudden they're offered the minimum. People are looking after themselves now, rather than looking out for the best for their teams.

**IS:** Over the years you've gotten more vocal about your Christian beliefs. Now you're heavily involved with the Eagles' Bible study group. How did that progress?

**RC:** When I came in as a rookie I always believed in God, but I didn't understand what being a Christian was. Reggie White [an ordained Baptist minister] worked on me my first year, Reggie worked on me my second year—you know what I mean. And in my third year I said: "OK, I've made a decision now. I'm following him until the end." And Reggie said: "He doesn't expect you to be perfect, but he expects you to grow like a baby grows. A baby grows and becomes a strong man or woman."

You've seen me grow over the years to where now I stand up for Jesus and for God. I've changed and gotten married, and I've made a step I needed to make, because I want God to see that I'm true, a true soldier. I'm in an army that isn't going to lose. God's army isn't going to lose. He's always going to win, and I've just got to make sure that I'm a part of it. You don't show you're a part of it by talking. You live your life in that fashion, and I've learned to do that.

**IS:** You live in a palatial house in Las Vegas, with telephones and televisions in the bathroom and a huge closet full of designer suits. The Bible says it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Doesn't your lifestyle contradict your religious beliefs?

**RC:** It's not contradictory when you read the Bible. It says all things come from God. You acknowledge that and say, 'God, thank you for everything.' And he's only going to give you what you can handle—he's not going to give you something you can't handle. So when I own a rich house or whatever, it's because God has blessed me with it. He sees that I'm enjoying it and I'm appreciating it.

**IS:** You also used to own a big house in the Philadelphia area. One of the knocks against you was you never shared that house with your teammates, which contributed to your reputation as being aloof. Was that fair?

**RC:** I had a room built in my basement for my team. I put something like \$20,000 into building this room, so guys could come over and watch the fights, shoot pool, whatever. But some guys didn't come over. "Come on over, man." "Nah, man, I don't want to go to your house, man." Like my wedding in 1993. I invited everyone on the

team to my wedding. It was right around minicamp. I told them after the season, sent out invitations, set up special tables and everything. How many guys did we get? Eight, 10 maybe?

I go out of my way to do stuff. I love my teammates. But those guys are in the past. These [current teammates] are cool. Still, some of them have different beliefs, some people like to go out and do different things.

**IS:** So even a lot of your teammates don't understand you?

**RC:** I'm unknown. The real me is unknown.

**IS:** But before you said you weren't an enigma.

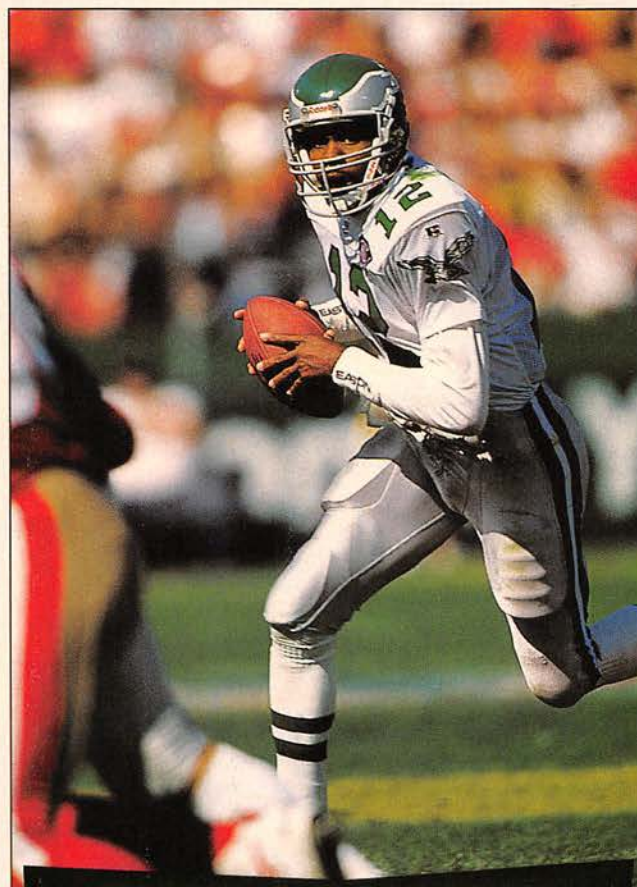
**RC:** Nobody is going to know me anyway. You know what I mean? Who spends time with me? My wife. My wife knows me, because I don't hide anything from my wife. I don't have to hide anything from her.

**IS:** Is that why you tend to ramble when you talk to the media, because you feel you have to hide who you really are?

**RC:** I'm concerned about what I say. I know there are a lot of sharks out there who want to eat it up. But the thing I do realize is that nobody knows me. And sometimes I wish they did. The people at my church, they know what kind of person I am. Not because I donated a million-something dollars to the church over the years, not because I built a million-dollar facility or whatever, but because when they see me at church they don't see the football player—they see me. They see I come to church late, just like everybody else, or I'm standing up praising God with my hands in the air, just like them. I'm singing songs just like them. We're all the same. A lot of people don't see that. They wouldn't take the time to go to the church.

**IS:** You and your wife, Felicity, are expecting your first child together. How do you think that will change you?

**RC:** A lot of people say the stuff that used to matter isn't going to matter anymore.



PETER READ/FOCUS ON SPORTS

*"Things have changed; things are more realistic. The top quarterbacks will get picked, regardless of color."*

The only thing that will matter is the baby. I believe that. I listen to my wife's stomach, and I hear the baby's heart beating, then I listen to her heart, and it's a different beating. It's amazing. I dated a great lady, and things didn't work out, but I took her kids for about four years, and I enjoyed it, even though it's a lot of pressure. It would just be amazing, man, if God gives me a little boy. But I just want a healthy child.

**IS:** Will you want your child to play football?

**RC:** The first thing I'm going to give my child is a Bible. I want my child to play whatever—children play whatever they want. But I'll tell you one thing: I've got Andre Agassi living around the corner, so my child might be a tennis player. I'm gonna save my money now so I can afford to have Andre teach my child how to play tennis. Andre's gonna be expensive, man. ■

KEVIN NOONAN has been writing about the Eagles since 1981—when Randall Cunningham was a fourth-string freshman quarterback at Nevada-Las Vegas.



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# the Hard Way

**Western Conference** by **HUBIE BROWN**  
**Eastern Conference** by **BILL WALTON**

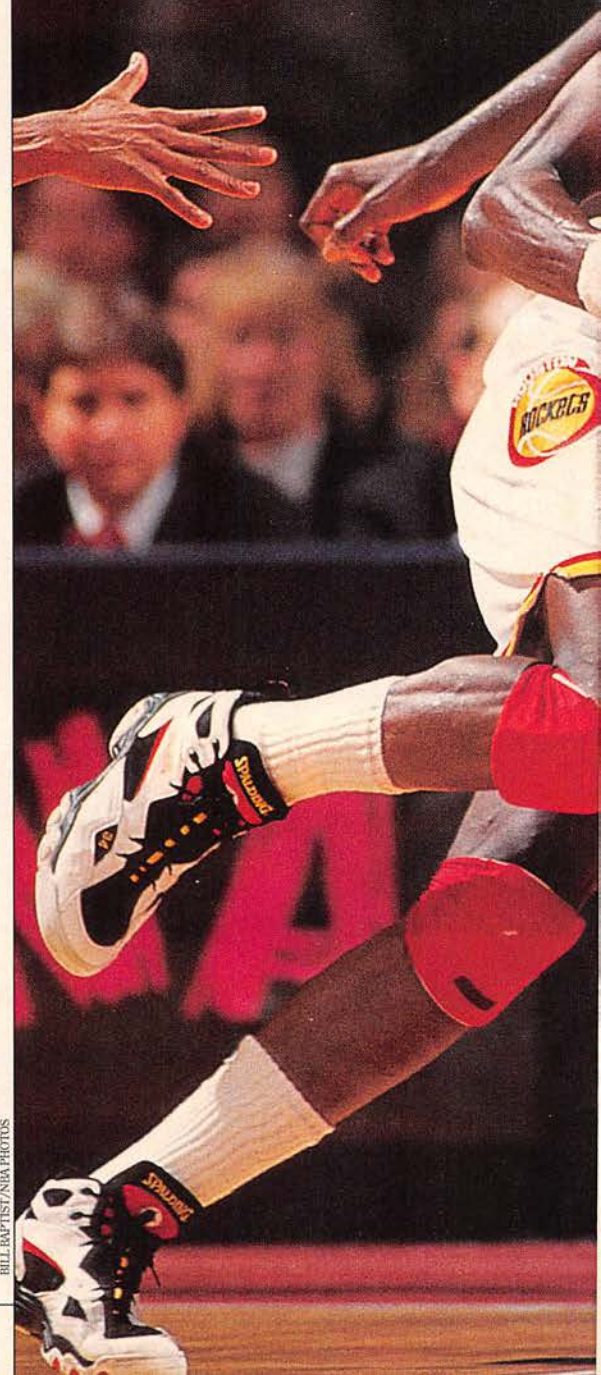
**B**ICKERING OWNERS, PLAYERS, AND agents dominated the headlines in a tumultuous offseason. The negotiations for the new collective bargaining agreement, as well as talk of the decertification of the players union, set the tone for the coming season. On the court, the race for the NBA championship promises to be as unpredictable and wide-open as it has been for years.

As many as six teams have a chance to win the championship. Hakeem Olajuwon's magnificent playoff performance and Houston's inspiring charge to its second consecutive title are only memories. Now the Rockets must answer to the revenge-minded San Antonio Spurs and the Phoenix Suns, who want to win it all in what figures to be Charles Barkley's last hurrah.

In the East, the Orlando Magic have a dogfight on their hands. A rejuvenated Michael Jordan wants another ring—his fourth in six years—and he'll have an entire season to prepare for yet another title run. The Indiana Pacers, who pushed the Magic to Game 7 in the conference finals, also served notice that they're no longer content to be supporting players.

Here are Bill and Hubie's picks for the 1995-96 season:

*To win a third straight title, Hakeem Olajuwon and the Rockets must get past some major obstacles, including a hungry Shaquille O'Neal*



BILL RABBIT/NBA PHOTOS





## 1995-96 NBA Predictions



**Bill Walton**



**Hubie Brown**

### Atlantic Division

1. Magic
2. Knicks
3. Bullets
4. 76ers
5. Heat
6. Celtics
7. Nets

1. Magic
2. Knicks
3. Heat
4. 76ers
5. Nets
6. Celtics
7. Bullets

### Central Division

1. Bulls
2. Hornets
3. Pacers
4. Cavaliers
5. Bucks
6. Pistons
7. Hawks
8. Raptors

1. Bulls
2. Pacers
3. Hornets
4. Cavaliers
5. Hawks
6. Bucks
7. Pistons
8. Raptors

### Midwest Division

1. Rockets
2. Spurs
3. Jazz
4. Mavericks
5. Nuggets
6. Timberwolves
7. Grizzlies

1. Spurs
2. Rockets
3. Jazz
4. Nuggets
5. Mavericks
6. Timberwolves
7. Grizzlies

### Pacific Division

1. Suns
2. SuperSonics
3. Lakers
4. Kings
5. Trail Blazers
6. Warriors
7. Clippers

1. SuperSonics
2. Suns
3. Lakers
4. Warriors
5. Trail Blazers
6. Kings
7. Clippers

### Eastern Conference Playoff teams

Bucks, Bullets, Bulls, Cavaliers, Hornets, Knicks, Magic, Pacers

Bulls, Cavaliers, Hawks, Heat, Hornets, Knicks, Magic, Pacers

### Western Conference Playoff teams

Jazz, Lakers, Mavericks, Nuggets, Rockets, Sonics, Spurs, Suns

Jazz, Lakers, Mavericks, Nuggets, Rockets, Sonics, Spurs, Suns

### Eastern Conference Champion

**Bulls**

**Magic**

### Western Conference Champion

**Rockets**

**Spurs**

### NBA Champion

**Rockets**

**Magic**



## The West

### MIDWEST

#### Houston Rockets

**Where they left off:** After a 47-35 regular season, the Rockets upset Utah, Phoenix, and San Antonio, then steamrolled the Magic 4-0 in the Finals for their second straight NBA title.

**Key personnel changes:** Troubled off guard Vernon Maxwell was waived.

**Walton says:** Look for a better regular season simply because of the presence of Clyde Drexler from the start of camp. He allows the Rockets to play an uptempo style with a lot of ball movement and more shots per game.

Hakeem Olajuwon, unquestionably the NBA's best player, will continue his onslaught on the league. His play in the 1995 postseason was a signature performance by one of the sport's all-time greatest competitors.

The playoffs also saw power forward Robert Horry come of age; in the Finals he outplayed Horace Grant and regularly hit clutch shots. Unlike the classic power forward, Horry is a mobile, athletic runner who creates space for his dominant post-up man, finishes the break, and nails the three.

The Rockets' biggest concern is that they go no more than seven players deep. Houston defies conventional wisdom—it regularly gets outrebounded and receives inconsistent point guard play from Kenny Smith—but as long as the Rockets are healthy for the playoffs and have Olajuwon patrolling the lane, they'll be the team to beat.

**Brown's take:** *Basket to basket, this is the quickest team in the league. With Olajuwon, Drexler, and high-percentage three-point shooting from four positions, Houston should challenge San Antonio for the best record in the West.*

## San Antonio Spurs

**Where they left off:** After posting the league's best record, the Spurs fell to Houston in the conference finals, as Olajuwon manhandled center David Robinson.

**Key personnel changes:** Point guard Doc Rivers is an unrestricted free agent; small forwards Sean Elliott and Chuck

Person can exercise their options to become free agents. Power forward Terry Cummings was released but may be asked to return.

**Walton says:** The Spurs face critical questions: Will Robinson and the team continue to tolerate power forward Dennis Rodman and his distractions for another season? And how productive will their aging bench be if it loses some key contributors?

The relationship between the Spurs and Rodman is critical. When Rodman is committed to playing, the Spurs are a terrific team that can challenge for the title. However, as he showed in the playoffs, Rodman can be a selfish sideshow who hurts the team.

Robinson must develop more skills and become more analytical. He must learn how to change the flow of the game when he's playing against an Olajuwon. The Houston series had to shock Robinson: He stormed through the season and won the most valuable player award—then faced someone better than him and didn't know what to do.

Cummings and Rivers should be re-signed to maintain a strong second unit. The Spurs do need another scorer to back up shooting guard Vinnie Del Negro, who has off nights. Look for continued improvement from underappreciated point guard Avery Johnson, who creates opportunities for a maturing Elliott.

**Brown's take:** *Elliott, Person, and Rivers must be re-signed. With a healthy Robinson and a controlled Rodman, this team has the firepower and rebounding to win the West.*

## Utah Jazz

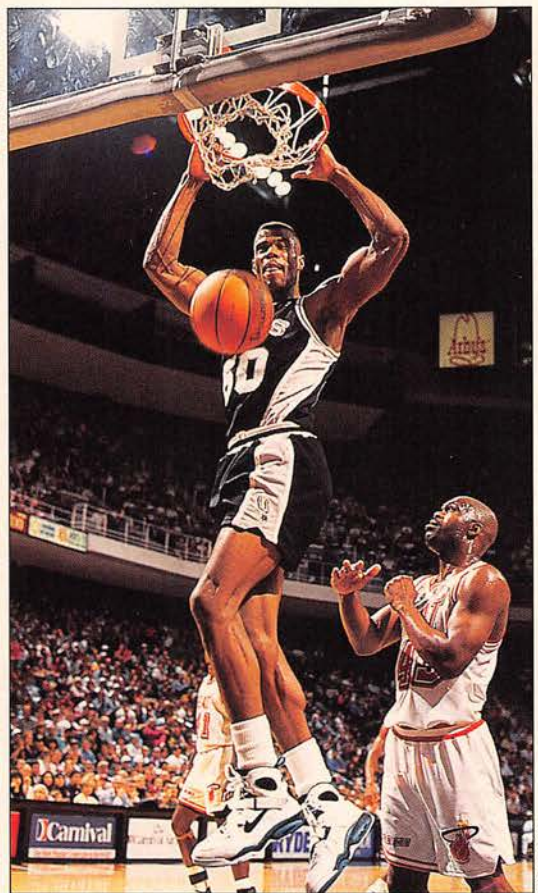
**Where they left off:** The Jazz had their best regular season ever (60-22) but failed to put away Olajuwon and the Rockets in the first round.

**Key personnel changes:** Utah lost small forward Blue Edwards to Vancouver via expansion. Power forward/center Tom Chambers, point guard John Crotty, and center James Donaldson are unrestricted free agents.

**Walton says:** At some point Karl Malone and John Stockton will have to slow

down, but both are coming off their best seasons. Utah must find a way to take scoring pressure off Malone with better perimeter shooting, particularly from small forward. Power forward Adam Keefe gives the frontcourt another active, physical player who isn't afraid to mix it up.

The Jazz again will count on their sec-



**We know Robinson can jam—but will he ever develop the stuff to handle Hakeem?**

ond unit for big-time production. Two keys are the return of center Felton Spencer, who lost 48 games to an Achilles injury, and the development of rookie Greg Ostertag as his backup. Unfortunately, Utah lost Edwards and may lose Chambers, and still doesn't have any backcourt bench to support Stockton and off guard Jeff Hornacek.

Utah will continue to put heat on Houston, San Antonio, and Phoenix—but the Jazz don't have anyone who can match up with Olajuwon. They'd better hope Houston stumbles against somebody else.

**Brown's take:** *Center will be key this season, which puts a lot of pressure on Ostertag. Bench play was the main reason Utah won 60 games; it remains to be seen who replaces Chambers and Edwards on the second unit.*





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# 1995-96 NBA Preview

## Dallas Mavericks

**Where they left off:** The Mavericks improved by 23 wins despite losing shooting guard Jim Jackson for 31 games because of an injury. First-year point guard Jason Kidd made a huge impact.

**Key personnel changes:** Power forward Doug Smith went to Toronto. Power forward/center Lorenzo Williams is a restricted free agent.

**Walton says:** Dallas' young All-Star-caliber players—Kidd, Jackson, and small forward Jamal Mashburn—provide long-term stability. Now coach Dick Motta must build around them.

The Mavs' biggest need is big, strong people who can rebound and fight down low. Motta tried to address that shortcoming by drafting power forward/centers Cherokee Parks and Loren Meyer. Parks will have to show he can play the rugged physical game under the basket, but his offensive range and mobility will leave the middle open for Dallas' Big Three to create offensively; plus, Parks' high-post passing should be a perfect fit for Motta's offensive scheme. The bulky Meyer provides rebounding depth at center.

The strength of this team is its offense. Kidd, the floor leader, has a keen understanding of how basketball is played. His creativity and willingness to make sacrifices on the court for his teammates remind me of how Bill Russell and Magic Johnson played the game.

The Mavericks are still a few proven frontcourt players away, but they're certainly headed up.

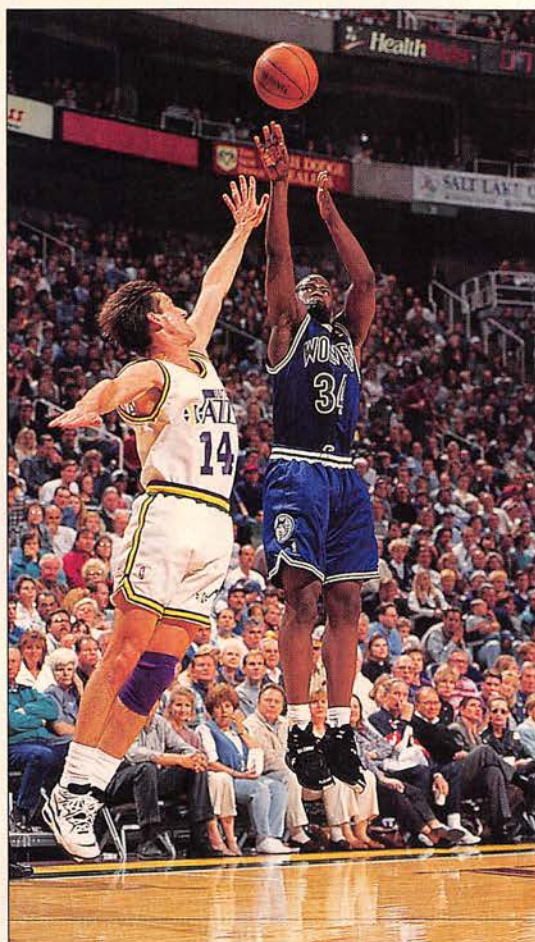
**Brown's take:** Parks and Meyer definitely help at center, but Dallas must improve its shooting (.440) and defense (106.1 ppg) if it is going to make the playoffs.

## Denver Nuggets

**Where they left off:** GM Bernie Bickerstaff took over as coach in February and led the Nuggets to the final playoff seed. Denver was swept in the first round by San Antonio.

**Key personnel changes:** Small forward Rodney Rogers and 1995 first-round draft choice Brent Barry were traded to the Clippers for rookie power forward Antonio McDyess and point guard Randy Woods. Denver traded power forward Brian Williams to the Clippers for center Elmore Spencer.

**Walton says:** The healthy return of



**Uneasy Rider:** The wayward Wolf doesn't have many shots left to get his career in gear.

power forward LaPhonso Ellis, who missed last season because of a stress fracture in his right knee, is crucial. Ellis is a clutch player, a tough inside force, and a leader. McDyess will provide additional firepower and potentially, should Ellis remain inactive, another star.

Center Dikembe Mutombo anchors the defense, but he must improve his overall game. He didn't play well against David Robinson in the playoffs: six points and 6.3 rebounds to Robinson's 19 ppg and 6.7 rpg. It's one thing to put up good regular-season statistics; it's something else to turn those stats into victories in big games.

Denver's biggest concern is point guard. The Rockets must commit to either Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, Jalen Rose, or Robert Pack. When there are too many quality players at one position, particularly at point, too much substitution can create dissension, confusion, selfishness, and lack of flow.

**Brown's take:** Ellis' condition is critical. Plus, Denver must improve on a home record of 23-18 and get better defense from the backcourt.

## Minnesota Timberwolves

**Where they left off:** With the fifth 60-loss season in their six-year history.

**Key personnel changes:** Centers Sean Rooks and Stacey King are restricted free agents. Minnesota drafted high school sensation Kevin Garnett.

**Walton says:** The best thing about this organization is general manager Kevin McHale. His contributions and stabilizing influence will have a great impact—but he'll find it's much easier to be a great player than it is to teach others how to be great.

The Timberwolves like Garnett's physical skills and his boyish enthusiasm. At 6'11" and 220 pounds, he's an excellent passer who runs the floor, blocks shots, scores from the post and the perimeter, and plays every frontcourt position.

A major weakness for Minnesota is rebounding, where the Wolves ranked dead last. Power forward Christian Laettner needs to develop a physical presence that will set a tone for the team. Shooting and turnovers are further problem

areas. Power forward Tom Gugliotta has been a welcome addition.

Swingman Isaiah Rider is at a critical juncture in his career. He has had enough wake-up calls; he needs to see the light and commit himself fully to the team.

The Wolves certainly aren't an immediate threat for the championship, but they hope this is the season that will be the springboard to respectability.

**Brown's take:** Garnett has highlight-film potential. The Wolves must learn to win at home, and must improve their rebounding and three-point shooting. The minus-9 point differential also must improve.

## Vancouver Grizzlies

**Roster:** Point guards—Greg Anthony, Derrick Phelps, Trevor Ruffin. Off guards—Lawrence Moten, Byron Scott, Gerald Wilkins. Small forwards—Blue Edwards, Doug Edwards, Reggie Slater. Power forwards—Rodney Dent, Kenny Gattison, Antonio Harvey, Larry Stewart.



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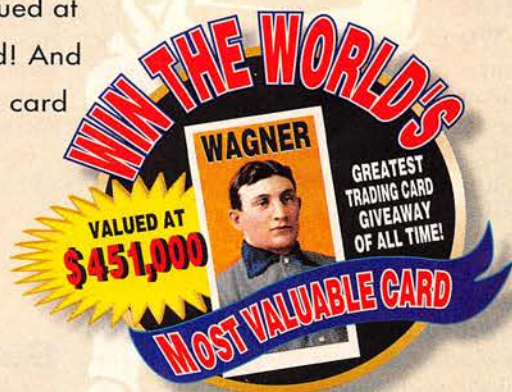
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Centers—Benoit Benjamin, Bryant Reeves.

**Walton says:** The first job for GM Stu Jackson and first-time coach Brian Winters is to build team spirit, pride, and cohesiveness among players other clubs didn't want. Scott, a quality veteran, may find it difficult to stomach finishing his career on a team years away from playoff contention; I wouldn't be surprised to see him on a contender before the season is over. On the other hand, expansion is a great opportunity for players such as Ruffin—a guy who can fill it up but who never got the opportunity with Phoenix.

The rookies should get a lot of playing time. Reeves is a hard worker who understands the game; he has nice hands and solid low-post moves. But you hate to have anyone's NBA role model be the underachieving Benjamin. Moten was a big scorer at Syracuse, but he must improve his shooting percentage to be an effective outside threat in the NBA. Unlike Reeves, though, he has a veteran model in Scott, who'll show him the right approach to the game.

Expansion teams are difficult to build because of massive roster changes every year. It's extremely important that Jackson and Winters don't saddle themselves with huge, long-term salary-cap problems that will prohibit effective personnel maneuvering in the immediate future.

**Brown's take:** *The Grizzlies have excellent guards for an expansion team, and a presence at center in Reeves and Benjamin. However, it's going to be a struggle night in and night out for Winters and his staff.*

## PACIFIC Phoenix Suns

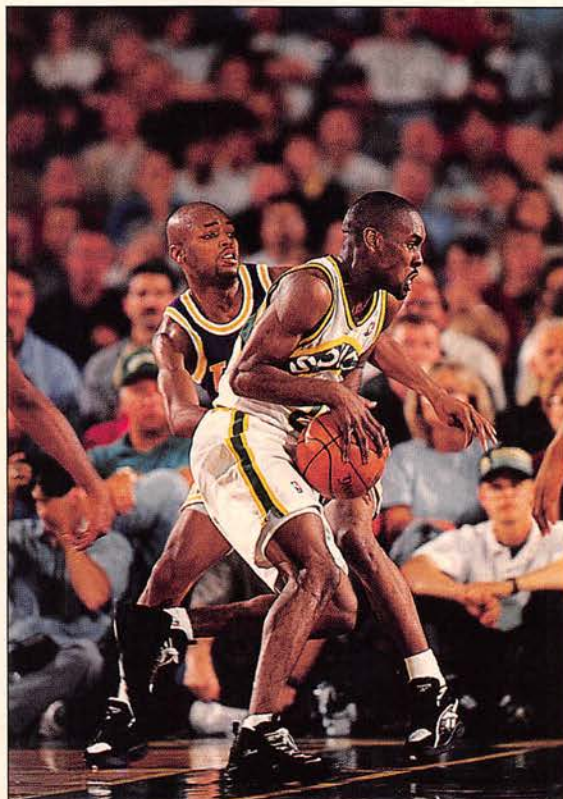
**Where they left off:** Despite losing Danny Manning because of a knee injury halfway through the season, Phoenix won the Pacific. Once again, though, the Suns fell to Houston in the second round.

**Key personnel changes:** Point guard Elliott Perry, power forward Wayman Tisdale, center Danny Schayes, and off guard Danny Ainge are unrestricted free agents.

**Walton says:** The continuing question is whether the Suns have enough in the middle to challenge the teams with great centers. They hope 27-year-old Italian forward/center Stefano Rusconi will help, but they also must stay healthy for a whole season. Manning, Tisdale, power forward Charles Barkley, and point guard Kevin

Johnson missed a combined 102 games last season.

Second-year shooting guard Wesley Person should continue to improve. Last season he averaged 10.4 points per game, and shot .484 from the field, including an impressive .436 from three-point range. Swingman Dan Majerle must refocus on playing a complete game rather than limiting himself to the three-pointer.



The Pacific war could come down to a battle of floor generals: Payton [with ball] vs. Van Exel.

Because of their winning atmosphere, the Suns are the franchise every player wants to be a part of today. Providing they stay healthy and re-sign their key free agents, they'll again challenge for a berth in the Finals—as long as Hakeem and the Rockets aren't standing in the way.

**Brown's take:** *As usual, the Suns will win during the season—but will Barkley be ready to dominate in the playoffs? Will Manning play at the same level?*

## Seattle SuperSonics

**Where they left off:** The Sonics underachieved for the second straight season, again falling in the first round of the playoffs.

**Key personnel changes:** Disgruntled

off guard Kendall Gill was traded to Charlotte for off guard Hersey Hawkins and small forward David Wingate.

**Walton says:** The offseason trade of Gill was good—the Sonics eliminated a personality problem between Gill and coach George Karl and acquired comparable talent in Hawkins and Wingate.

While Seattle waits for point guard Gary Payton and power forward Shawn Kemp to become the superstars everybody expects them to become, swingman Nate McMillan and power forward/center Sam Perkins remain the heart and soul of the team. But the 31-year-old McMillan has ankle problems, and Perkins, 34, eventually will start feeling the years.

Kemp can't rely forever on overpowering or outjumping people. He must develop a more disciplined game with a complete offensive arsenal. Payton has improved considerably over the past few seasons, but he must continue to develop as the team's emotional leader if Seattle is to make a run at the Finals.

The regular season is an appetizer for the playoffs. In the past two years Seattle's weaknesses were badly exposed: The Sonics have problems against solid rebounding and shot-blocking front lines, and against terrific point guard play such as they saw from the Nuggets' Robert Pack in '94 and the Lakers' Nick Van Exel last spring. These two areas further illustrate how the team's fate rests on Payton and Kemp.

**Brown's take:** *After losing in the first round again, the Sonics must improve their halfcourt offensive and defensive execution.*

## Los Angeles Lakers

**Where they left off:** In coach Del Harris' first year in L.A., the Lakers went a surprising 48-34, then knocked off Seattle and nearly upset the Spurs in the playoffs.

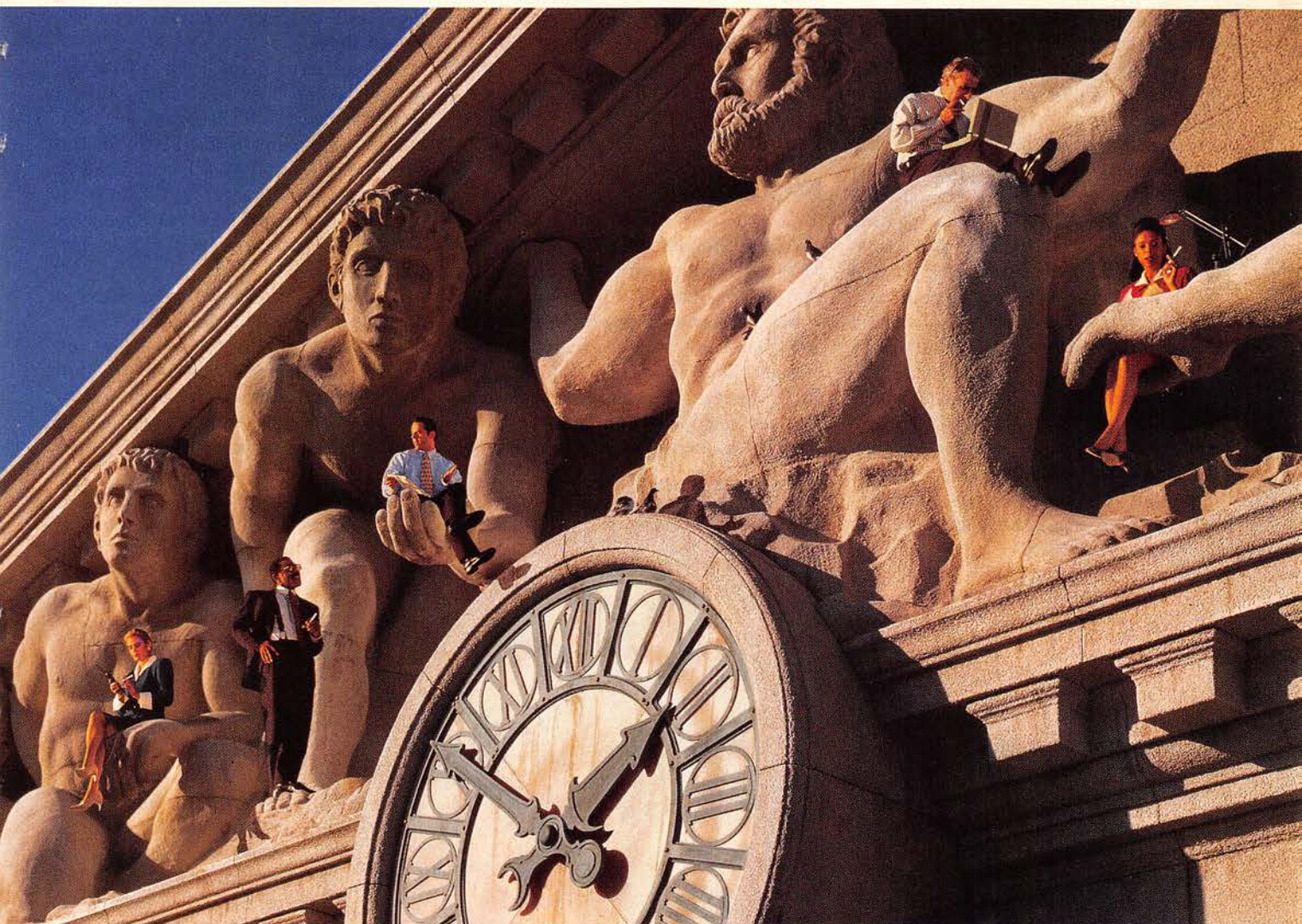
**Key personnel changes:** Center Sam Bowie retired.

**Walton says:** The Lakers have a good nucleus of young players, led by catalyst Nick Van Exel at the point. Like Jason Kidd



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in Dallas, Van Exel plays with flair. However, he must understand that the team's fortunes ride on his ability to perform consistently.

Small forward Cedric Ceballos blossomed as a scorer (21.7 ppg, .509 shooting), but like Van Exel he must work on his consistency. Against the Spurs in the playoffs, Ceballos dipped to 12.3 ppg and shot .385. Swingman Eddie Jones made the All-Rookie First Team; he has an explosiveness and physicality the Lakers lacked at small forward. Center Vlade Divac enjoyed his best statistical season, but L.A. as a whole must improve on the glass, where it allowed opponents a league-worst 45.8 rebounds per game.

The Lakers lose too many home games that really good teams should never lose—such as Game 6 of the semifinals against the Spurs. That inability to close out an opponent at home is a result of overconfidence and showboating instead of taking care of business.

**Brown's take:** *The Lakers' strengths are halfcourt trapping defense, athleticism, and the three-point game. Their major flaw is defensive rebounding.*

## Sacramento Kings

**Where they left off:** The Kings missed the final playoff spot by two games, but their 39 wins was the team's highest total since it moved from Kansas City in 1985.

**Key personnel changes:** Small forward Tyrone Corbin arrived from Atlanta in exchange for point guard Spud Webb.

**Walton says:** GM Geoff Petrie and coach Garry St. Jean are rebuilding this team along the lines of the Trail Blazers clubs of the early '90s. I expect the Kings to take another quantum leap this season.

The most valuable player on this team remains off guard Mitch Richmond, a proven scorer and go-to player who finally has received his due. The leader in the frontcourt is power forward Brian Grant, who averaged 13.2 ppg and 7.4 rpg as a rookie last season. Michael Smith is a rugged backup for Grant; rookie power forward Corliss Williamson must prove himself against bigger and taller players, but he should be a good one. Versatile swingman Walt Williams finally got into shape and posted 16.4 ppg.

However, the Kings need help at center; Olden Polynice and Duane Causwell combined had just 14.4 ppg and 11.9 rpg. Another question mark is point guard,

where Bobby Hurley, rookie Tyus Edney, and Randy Brown will vie for the job.

**Brown's take:** *The keys for the Kings are improving on the road, getting consistent production in the middle, and limiting turnovers. The darkhorse at point guard is Edney.*

## Portland Trail Blazers

**Where they left off:** The Blazers went 44-38 and were swept by the Suns in the first playoffs round.

**Key personnel changes:** Power forward Otis Thorpe was traded to Detroit for rookie point guard Randolph Childress. The Blazers signed 7'3" center Arvidas Sabonis, who had been playing in Spain. Small forward Jerome Kersey went to Toronto in the

Carlesimo about the direction of the team. Veterans play for the prestige of winning the NBA title; they're not good in rebuilding situations.

At power forward, rookie Gary Trent will provide fresh legs and young muscle behind aging Buck Williams. Aaron McKie and James Robinson will battle for the starter's role at off guard; both need to improve on sub-45% shooting. Childress, an explosive scorer and excellent three-point shooter, will have an opportunity to take over at the point.

A healthy Chris Dudley is expected to again be the force that enabled him to get a big contract from the Blazers. However, the once-great Sabonis, who will turn 31 in December and is showing wear, has almost lost his opportunity to make his mark at the highest level of basketball.

**Brown's take:** *This team lost some major talent, including Clyde Drexler, in a short span. Can Sabonis, who is 30 and has had injuries, keep up with the pace of the NBA?*



**The Kings have the shooting star in Richmond, but Sacramento remains unsettled at the point.**

## Golden State Warriors

**Where they left off:** In a season marred by controversy and injuries, the Warriors hit bottom, finishing 26-56. They were blown out on a regular basis.

**Key personnel changes:** Golden State acquired point guard B.J. Armstrong from Toronto in exchange for Victor Alexander and Carlos Rogers. The Warriors drafted power forward Joe Smith No. 1 overall.

**Walton says:** The lineup will feature Tim Hardaway at point, Latrell Sprewell at off guard, Rony Seikaly at center, second-year man Donyell Marshall at small forward, and Smith at power forward. The first order of

business for new general manager Dave Twardzik and new coach Rick Adelman is to repair the rift between Hardaway and Sprewell, which became public during a nightmare season and destroyed the team's chemistry. Smith is a fine player, but he's just 20 years old, and his rookie season

expansion draft. Off guard Terry Porter and centers Mark Bryant and James Edwards are unrestricted free agents.

**Walton says:** The top players are power forward/center Cliff Robinson (21.3 ppg) and point guard Rod Strickland (18.9), but both feuded with first-year coach P.J.



will be an extremely difficult adjustment.

Chris Mullin (if healthy) is the sixth man, and Chris Gatling provides frontcourt depth, but backcourt depth remains a question. The Warriors must improve in rebounding and take better care of the ball in order to regain credibility.

Twadzik and Adelman succeeded in Portland with a big, tough front line and durable, high-scoring perimeter players. Adelman's Warriors lineup is a completely different mix. He'll have to show flexibility and adaptability—or else start over.

**Brown's take:** *This year's team has the talent, experience, and offensive power to win 50 games—providing everyone stays healthy.*

## Los Angeles Clippers

**Where they left off:** The Clippers had the league's worst record (17-65) and worst road record (4-37), second-worst shooting percentage (.444), and worst opponents' shooting percentage (.496).

**Key personnel changes:** Small forward Rodney Rogers, guard Brent Barry, and power forward Brian Williams were acquired from Denver.

**Walton says:** Coach Bill Fitch knows a team can't be built overnight. His biggest challenge is to maintain the work ethic and team spirit demonstrated last season.

Rogers and Williams are big and physical, and they immediately add toughness and consistency to the front line. Teamed with Loy Vaught, the team's leading scorer (17.5 ppg) and rebounder (9.6 rpg) last season, they give the Clippers a potentially solid frontcourt.

Center remains the major question. Charles Outlaw, a 6'8" power forward, started the majority of games there last season, averaging 5.2 ppg and 3.8 rpg. Is Stanley Roberts committed enough to basketball to control his weight problems and rehabilitate from major surgery?

Barry, a rookie who was acquired in the Rogers deal, could be the steal of the 1995 draft. He's a highly skilled athlete, a good shooter, and a creative passer who can play both point guard and off guard. Another bright spot is shooting guard Malik Sealy, who posted a career-best 13.0 ppg last season. But he needs to improve on his .435 from the field.

**Brown's take:** *Rogers and Williams upgrade the front line, but the keys will be the health and availability of Roberts—a potential 20-ppg scorer—and the perimeter shooting.*

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## The East

### ATLANTIC Orlando Magic

**Where they left off:** The Magic finished a roller-coaster season strongly by reaching the NBA Finals, where they were swept by the Houston Rockets.

**Key personnel changes:** Off guards Brian Shaw and Anthony Bowie and three-point specialist Dennis Scott are unrestricted free agents.

**Brown says:** The Magic should easily win the conference, and they're one of the favorites to win the NBA title. In order to do so, they need to re-sign Shaw, Scott, and Bowie—three key players in their nine-man rotation.

Center Shaquille O'Neal and point guard Anfernee Hardaway are two of the league's premier players. With Scott, power forward Horace Grant, and shooting guard Nick Anderson thrown into the mix, Orlando was the league's top offensive team last season, at 110.9 ppg. The Magic are virtually unstoppable at home, but they must improve on the road, where they had an 18-23 record, and at the free throw line, where they ranked 27th; they shot .669 from the line during both the regular season and the postseason. Five Magic players shot 70% or less from the line for the season.

Despite the Finals sweep, the Magic made tremendous strides. Last season's playoff run was a tremendous growth experience, one that will only help in this year's title quest.

**Walton's take:** *The Magic need to psychologically regroup from their shellacking in the Finals, while Shaq and Hardaway need to believe they still have to improve.*

### New York Knicks

**Where they left off:** After ending the season in a flurry, the Knicks suffered a disheartening second-round elimination at the hands of the Indiana Pacers.

**Key personnel changes:** Coach Pat Riley resigned. Point guard Greg Anthony went to Vancouver in the expansion draft, and small forward Anthony Mason and power forward Anthony Bonner are unrestricted free agents.

**Brown says:** The Knicks' strength last season was defense, but the loss of

Anthony and the possible loss of Mason and Bonner will be felt both on the offensive and defensive ends. The pressure will be on point guard Charlie Ward, a first-round draft pick in 1994, to step up and provide major minutes behind Derek Harper. New coach Don Nelson will go with the Knicks' strong suits: designed halfcourt plays and tenacious half-court defense—a style he had a great deal of success with during the '80s, when he led the Milwaukee Bucks to seven straight division titles.

The window of opportunity for this team to win the title is closing rather quickly. The key players are advancing in age—Harper is 34, Ewing is 33, power forward Charles Oakley is 31, forward Charles Smith and shooting guard John Starks are 30—and they face a period of a major adjustment. The pressure from Knicks fans will be for a championship; anything else, and the season will be considered a bust.

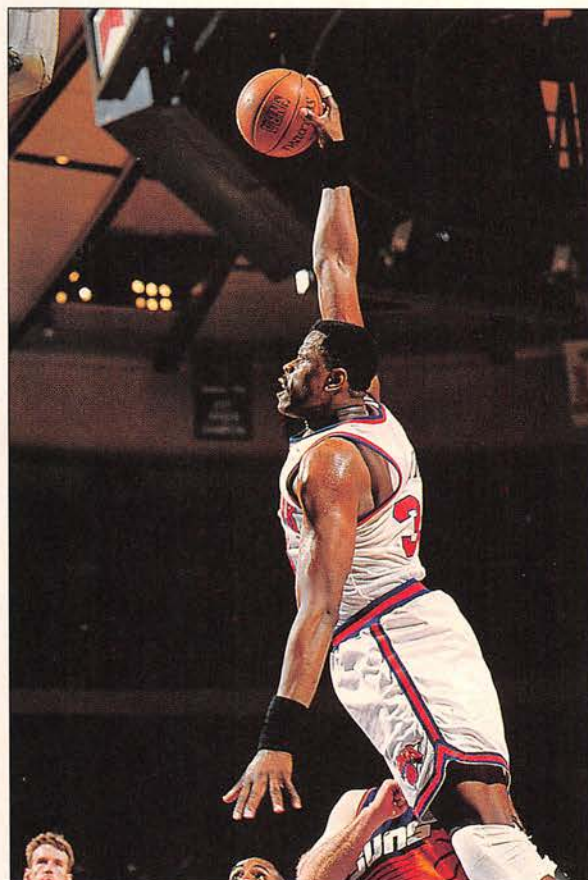
**Walton's take:** *A positive environment won't be enough—the Knicks need to realize that the players make plays and coaches make substitutions.*

### Miami Heat

**Where they left off:** Replacing coach Kevin Loughery with former assistant Alvin Gentry didn't stop the season-long slide; Miami missed the playoffs.

**Key personnel changes:** Pat Riley was hired as coach. Off guard Harold Miner was sent to the Cavaliers for a second-round pick. The Heat drafted 6'9" power forward Kurt Thomas, and a draft-day trade brought point guard Terrence Rencher and shooting guard Rex Chapman from the Washington Bullets in exchange for center Ed Stokes and power forward Jeff Webster.

**Brown says:** Riley's arrival infuses the organization with a feeling that it has a chance to win. However, it will take a season for this team to adapt to his philosophy and blend in its new players. One of the



Ewing is part of New York's 30-and-older crowd, whose last chance may have slipped out of reach.

first areas Riley will address is defense; Miami allowed 102.8 points per game, 16th in the league.

The Heat added a terrific scorer in the 25-year-old Pedrag Danilovic, who averaged 29.1 ppg last season in the Italian league. He'll lift some of the scoring load off swingman Glen Rice. Thomas represents the future at power forward; he'll get plenty of opportunity to play behind Kevin Willis. However, with John Salley gone, Miami could use depth at center behind Matt Geiger. For now, Riley must develop Danilovic and Chapman at off guard, decide where to play Billy Owens, and develop a solid second unit.

**Walton's take:** *Riley will work his magic once again. However, this time it will take a little longer than he's used to.*

### Boston Celtics

**Where they left off:** The Celtics went 6-4 in the final 10 games to gain the eighth playoff spot, and they gave the Magic a real scare in the first round before bowing in four games.



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**Key personnel changes:** Boston fired Chris Ford, one of the more underrated coaches in the league, and replaced him with GM M.L. Carr. Dominique Wilkins, the team's leading scorer at 17.8 ppg last season, chose to sign a two-year contract with the Greek team Panathinaikos. Forward Xavier McDaniel is an unrestricted free agent. The Celtics picked up small forward Eric Williams and power forward Junior Burroughs in the draft.

**Brown says:** After 16 world championships, the Celtics are leaving storied Boston Garden and entering the new Fleet Center with an extremely inexperienced coach who has a less-than-average talent base. What's more, they have difficulty on the road, where they won only 15 games last season.

The loss of Wilkins and McDaniel will put a lot of pressure on the rookie forwards, Williams and Burroughs, and Rick Fox. Second-year center Eric Montross and power forward Dino Radja are coming off excellent seasons; those two, along with Williams and Burroughs, represent the future of the franchise as it seeks to recapture its past glory. This season the Celtics must settle for a trip to the NBA lottery.

**Walton's take:** Carr now has his opportunity to show his vision of what this team is all about.

## New Jersey Nets

**Where they left off:** Last season was a year of injuries. Power forward Derrick Coleman, center Benoit Benjamin, shooting guard Kevin Edwards, and rookie center Yinka Dare all missed significant time as the Nets went 30-52 and missed the playoffs.

**Key personnel changes:** Benjamin left in the expansion draft, and center Dwayne Schintzius, small forward Chris Morris, power forwards Jayson Williams and Rick Mahorn, and off guard Sleepy Floyd could leave as unrestricted free agents. On the bright side, the Nets drafted small forward Ed O'Bannon.

**Brown says:** For the Nets to make any kind of noise, their stars—Coleman and Kenny Anderson—must play to their potential and rebound from subpar seasons. The Nets also will need to find a way to account for the 29 points and 18 rebounds per game that Morris, Williams, and Benjamin combined to produce. The arrival of O'Bannon will fill the small forward void, giving the Nets a much-needed offensive threat.

Despite last season's poor shooting—New Jersey ranked last in the league in field goal percentage at .436 and 25th from three-point range at .319—the Nets were able to stay in games because of strong rebounding, shot-blocking, and free throw shooting. The return of Edwards will be vital to the Nets' off guard position, but they need to sign some major free agents, especially at center, where Dare is their only returning player.

**Walton's take:** The Nets never will reach their potential until Coleman realizes what it takes to be a winner.

## Philadelphia 76ers

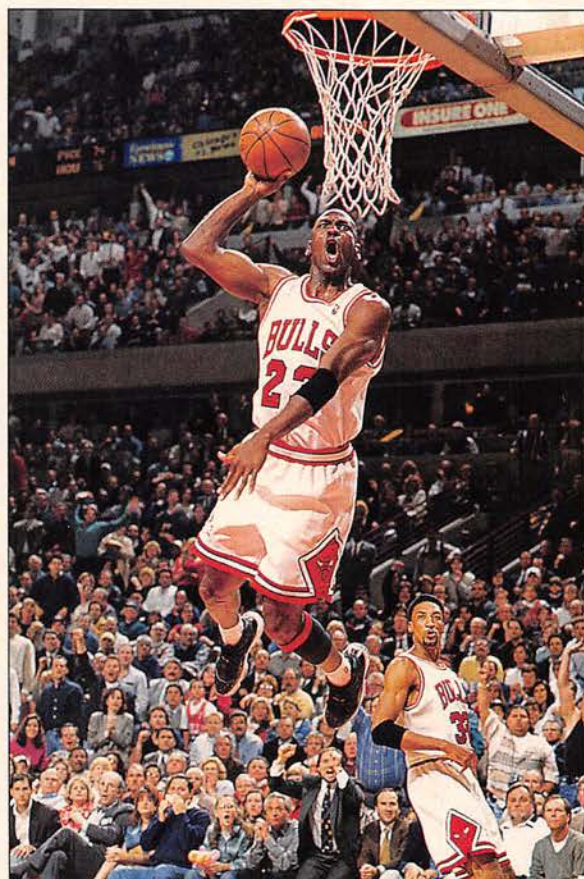
**Where they left off:** The Sixers never got going in coach John Lucas' first season. Injuries hurt the perimeter game; all told, 19 different players suited up for Philly.

**Key personnel changes:** The Sixers selected swingman Jerry Stackhouse No. 3 in the draft. Swingman Willie Burton and point guard Dana Barros are unrestricted free agents; Philly signed small forward Richard Dumas, who has had several suspensions for violating the league's substance abuse policy.

**Brown says:** To make a run at the playoffs, the 76ers must re-sign Barros, an All-Star last season who averaged 20.6 points and 7.4 assists, shot .490 from the field, and made 197 three-pointers. Jeff Malone's return from injury provides depth behind Stackhouse, who will start at two guard, but if the Sixers don't sign Barros they would lose their best outside shooter.

The backbone of this team is its frontcourt. It has size and strength in center Shawn Bradley and power forwards Sharone Wright and Scott Williams—the Sixers were second in the league in shot-blocking—and versatility in forwards Clarence Weatherspoon and Dumas. However, the 76ers were 23rd in field goal percentage at .448, which won't get them to the playoffs. They also have to improve on their league-low 19 assists per game.

**Walton's take:** The young raw potential is there; now Lucas needs to mold



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it and shape it. It's time for Bradley to make his move.

## Washington Bullets

**Where they left off:** In Jim Lynam's first season as coach, the Bullets had the worst record in the Eastern Conference and won only 13 games at home.

**Key personnel changes:** The Bullets traded guard Rex Chapman and 1995 second-round draft choice Terrence Rencher to Miami for center Ed Stokes and power forward Jeff Webster. Point guard Scott Skiles is an unrestricted free agent. The Bullets drafted power forward/center Rasheed Wallace.

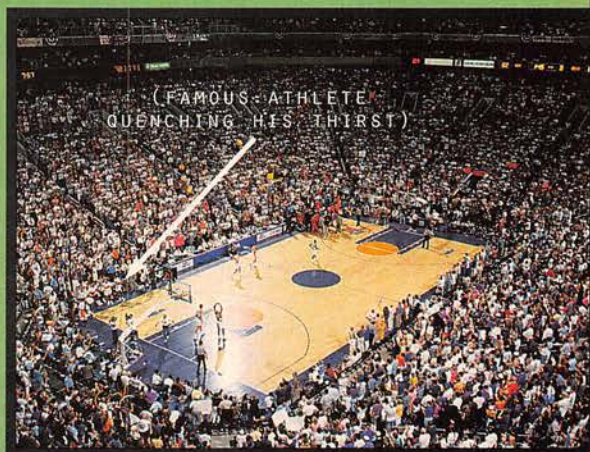
**Brown says:** The Bullets are loaded in the frontcourt with power forwards Chris Webber and Juwan Howard—former Fab Five teammates—and Wallace; small forward Don MacLean; and centers Gheorghe Muresan, Kevin Duckworth, and Jim McIlvaine. (MacLean, the league's most improved player for 1993-94, missed 43 games last season with injuries.) All of these players have size, and except for Duckworth their average age is just 23. Despite this size and depth, however, the





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Bullets ranked only 24th in the league in rebounding.

The Bullets desperately need a point guard who can hit from outside and break down the defense when time is running out on the shot clock. The best returning perimeter shooter is Calbert Cheaney, who shot .453 last season; as a team, the Bullets shot just .460, 18th in the NBA. They also must better their point differential (24th last year, at minus-5.6).

**Walton's take:** *It's only a matter of how fast these young players will develop. If this team falls into place and clicks right away, watch out!*

## CENTRAL Chicago Bulls

**Where they left off:** Michael Jordan returned to lead the Bulls to a 13-4 record, but they lost to the Orlando Magic in the second round because they couldn't take care of the defensive boards.

**Key personnel changes:** Point guard B.J. Armstrong was taken by Toronto in the expansion draft. Power forward Corie Blount was traded to the Lakers for future considerations. The Bulls drafted power forward Jason Caffey to help shore up their rebounding.

**Brown says:** Obviously, Chicago will be a much stronger team with Jordan. He'll improve their halfcourt offensive execution and—with his ability to block shots, double-team, and shut down opposing off guards—he'll help them return to being one of the better halfcourt defensive teams. Jordan will turn 33 this season, and he might see less action, but because of his competitive fire I suspect he'll log 38 to 40 minutes in the big games against contenders.

The Bulls' big question is whether to continue starting Toni Kukoc at power forward or bring him off the bench. In my opinion, Kukoc is more effective as a sixth man at either small forward or power forward—coach Phil Jackson can go with Jordan and Scottie Pippen in the backcourt and Kukoc at small forward—but his role could be determined by the effectiveness of Caffey, Dickie Simpkins, and Bill Wennington.

The Bulls also must shoot free throws better than their .726 mark last season. Unless they improve that and address their rebounding needs, I don't see them reaching the NBA Finals.

**Walton's take:** *To bring the Bulls another championship, Jordan needs*

*to start over and teach his new teammates how to play.*

## Indiana Pacers

**Where they left off:** The Pacers won the Central, swept the Hawks in the first round, and defeated the New York Knicks in an exciting seven-game conference semifinal, but came up short against Orlando in the conference final.

**Key personnel changes:** The Pacers lost veteran off guard Byron Scott in the expansion draft. Point guards Haywoode Workman and Vern Fleming, small forward Sam Mitchell, and power forward/center LaSalle Thompson are unrestricted free agents.

**Brown says:** Indiana will contend for the conference title, led by shooting guard Reggie Miller and center Rik Smits, who really blossomed in the postseason. However, small forward Derrick McKey, the team's third-leading scorer at 13.3 ppg, was inconsistent away from Market Square Arena at playoff time. He, Dale Davis, or Antonio Davis must emerge to give the Pacers another offensive weapon. This year Indiana hopes to get backcourt help from rookies Travis Best and Fred Hoiberg off the bench, especially if Best reverts to the slashing, penetrating style he showed in high school, rather than the sporadic perimeter game he played at Georgia Tech.

The Pacers are among the league's outstanding defensive teams—they held opponents to 95.5 points per game, which was fourth-best in the league. They'll be difficult to score against this season.

**Walton's take:** *Miller and Smits have to play their best in the biggest games at the end of the season and at the end of playoff series.*

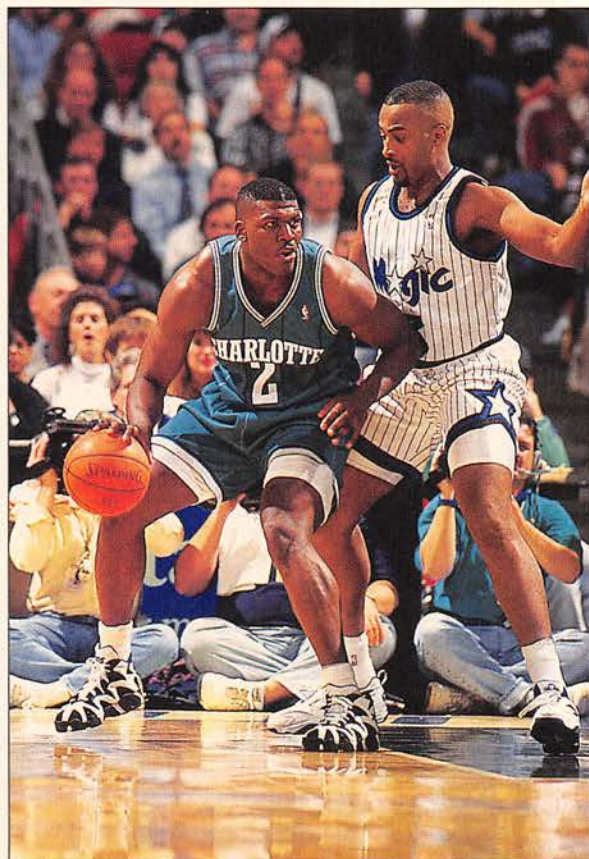
## Charlotte Hornets

**Where they left off:** After posting a 47-35 record, Charlotte lost to Chicago in four games in the first round, when they shot

poorly and scored only 92.5 points per game.

**Key personnel changes:** The Hornets traded shooting guard Hersey Hawkins and small forward David Wingate to the Seattle SuperSonics for off guard Kendall Gill. They lost Kenny Gattison in the expansion draft, and drafted center George Zidek from UCLA.

**Brown says:** On offense the Hornets will continue to run, led by center Alonzo Mourning, power forward Larry Johnson, and point guard Muggsy Bogues, who last season averaged a league-best six assists for every turnover. Charlotte led the league



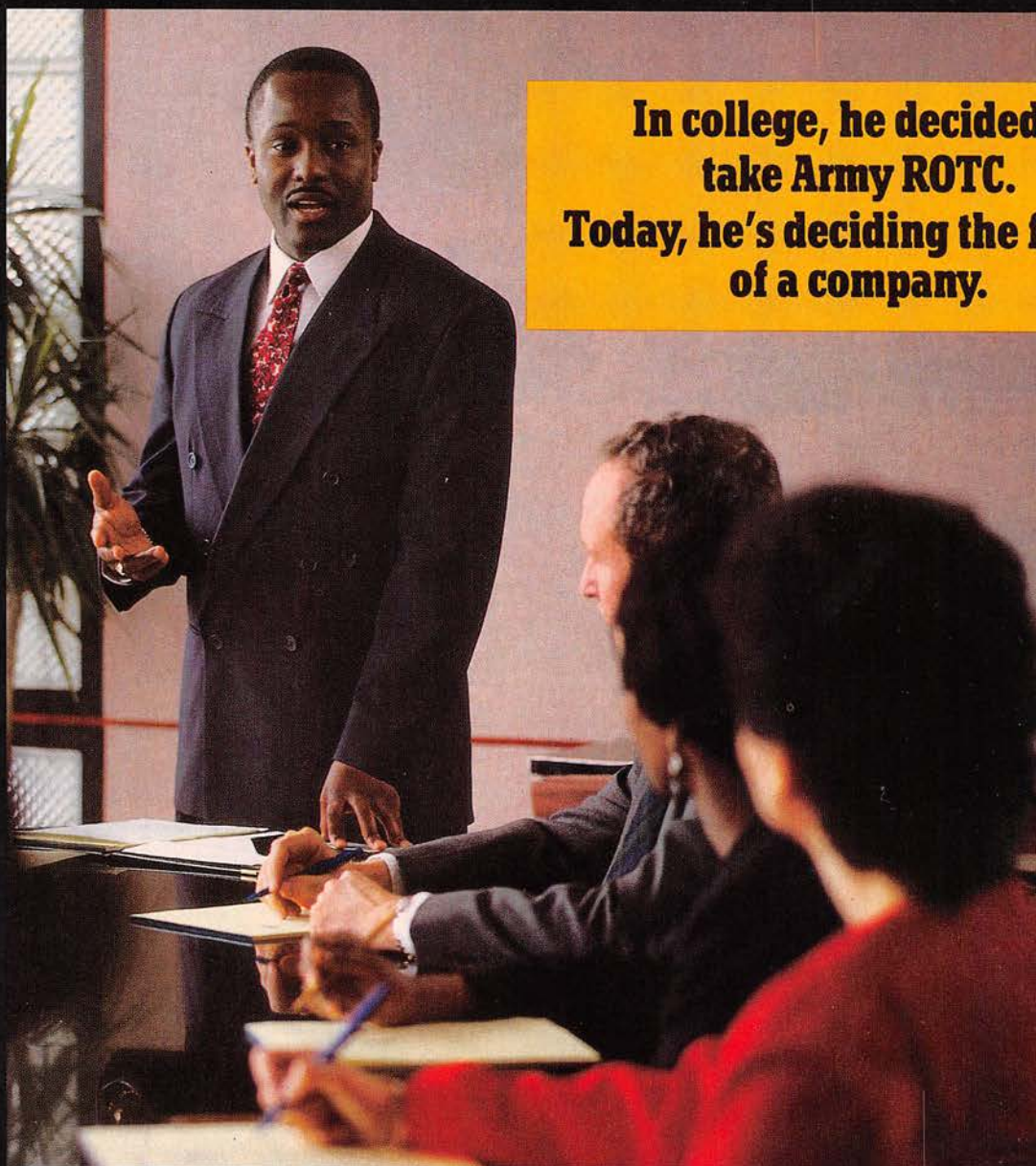
**If the Hornets stay healthy, LJ and company have what it takes to bump bodies with the Magic.**

in three-point shooting at .397 and was a respectable .474 from the field. Either Gill or Scott Burrell, who really came on last season before partially tearing his Achilles tendon, could emerge as the third scorer. Gill's quickness improves the Hornets defensively, but his return raises questions concerning team chemistry at the offensive end.

The Hornets have to improve their rebounding; they were 24th in the league, at 39.4 rebounds per game. Zidek should help in this area and provide a suitable backup to Mourning at center; if he does,



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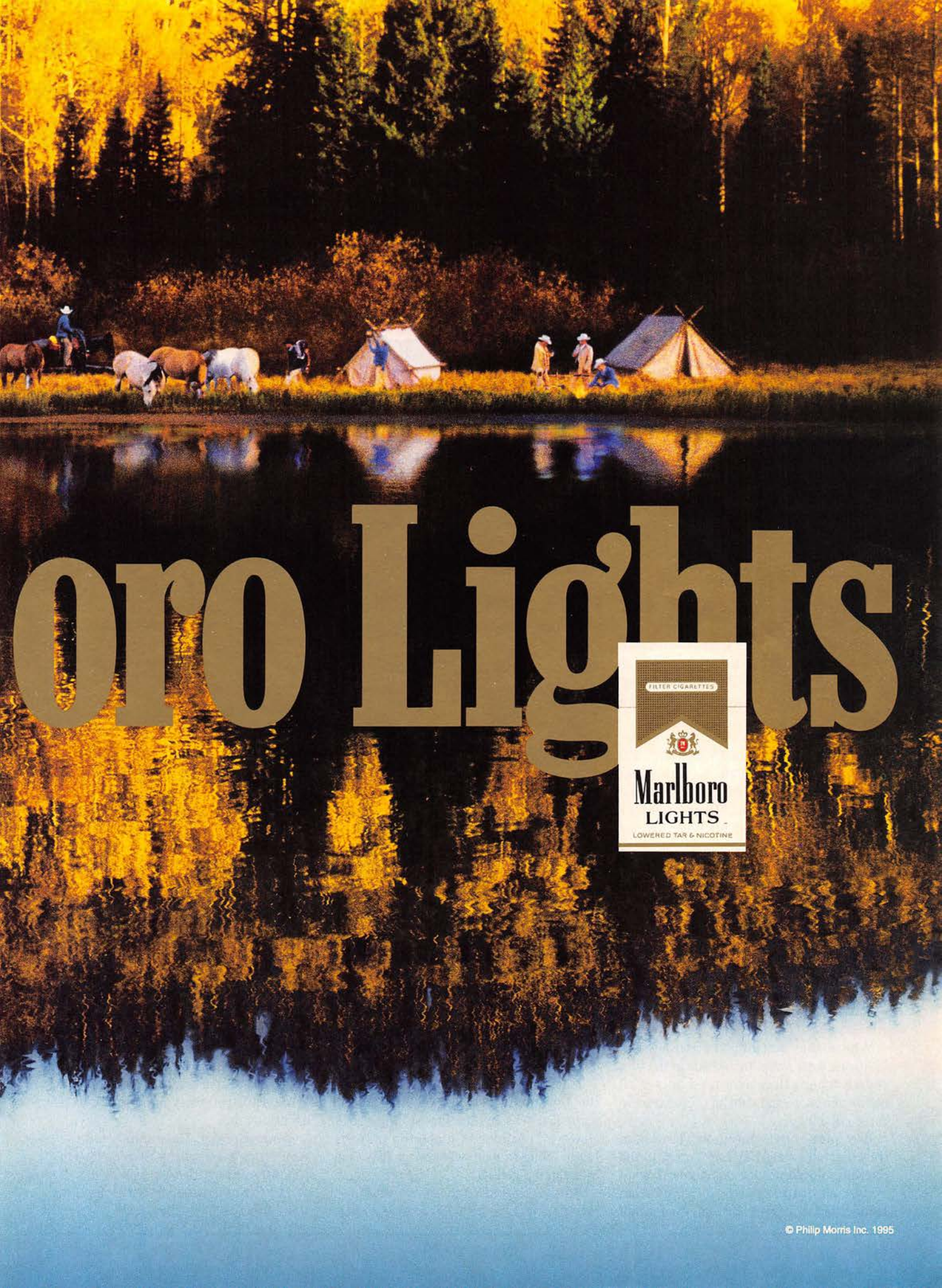
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what happens to veteran pivotman Robert Parrish?

**Walton's take:** *A full season of good health for Johnson, Mourning, Bogues, and Burrell will bring the Hornets near the top of the NBA.*

## Cleveland Cavaliers

**Where they left off:** Though ravaged by injuries, the Cavs went 43-39 before losing in the first round to the Knicks.

**Key personnel changes:** The Cavs acquired off guard Harold Miner from Miami and drafted versatile guard Bob Sura and small forward Donny Marshall. Shooting guard Gerald Wilkins went to Vancouver in the expansion draft.

**Brown says:** The key is Brad Daugherty's lower back. If he can play, Cleveland starts a front line of Daugherty in the middle, either Tyrone Hill or John Williams at power forward, and Chris Mills at small forward. If he can't, the Cavs resort to the slow-down game they ran so successfully last season.

Due to their style of play, the Cavs finished last in scoring, at 90.5 points per game. However, they also held opponents to a mere 89.8 points per game, the second-lowest mark in NBA history since the institution of the shot clock. Winning is the key, and coach Mike Fratello and his staff did a marvelous job.

The Cavs ranked second from three-point range, at .385, and shot a solid .760 from the foul line. But their overall field goal shooting, at .441, ranked 25th in the league. The addition of Miner—a player who never has reached his potential, for whatever reasons—Sura, and Marshall, an excellent three-point shooter and slashing-type player, should help.

**Walton's take:** *Miner will become the Cavs' Reggie Miller, but Fratello will scramble to fill the other positions with healthy bodies.*

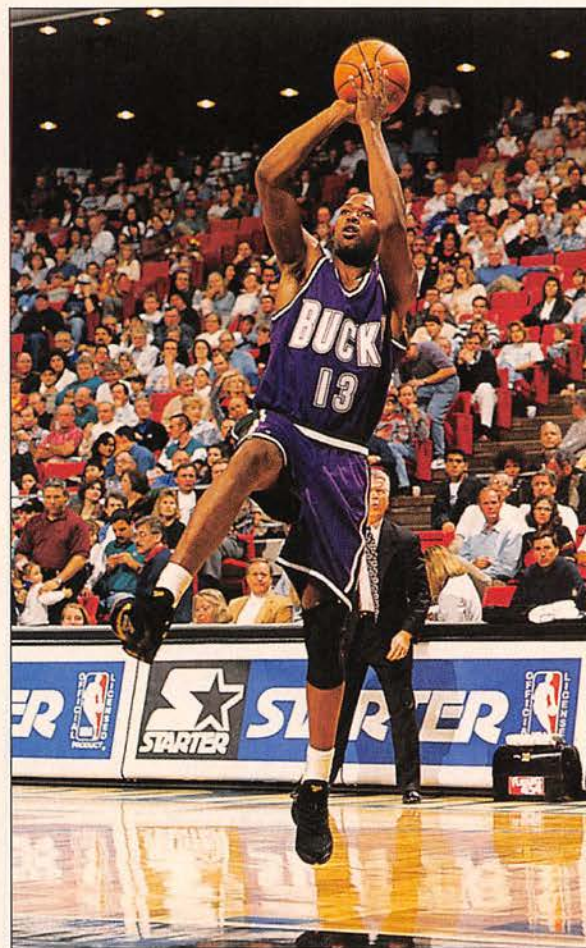
## Atlanta Hawks

**Where they left off:** The Hawks went 42-40 and were swept by Indiana in the first round, where they averaged only 89.3 points per game and shot just 33% from the three-point line.

**Key personnel changes:** The Hawks traded small forward Tyrone Corbin to the Sacramento Kings for point guard Spud Webb and drafted power forwards Alan Henderson and Troy Brown, swingman

Donnie Boyce, and off guard Cuonzo Martin. Centers Jon Koncak and Andrew Lang, power forward/center Greg Anderson, and point guard Jim Les are unrestricted free agents; small forward Doug Edwards left in the expansion draft.

**Brown says:** Now that off guard Steve Smith and power forward Grant Long have been in Atlanta for a year, the offense should improve. The low number of free throw attempts per game—23.8, 26th in the league—shows the inside game remains weak; Henderson will back up



**The rebuilding continues apace in Milwaukee, where Big Dog should assert himself big-time.**

Long at power forward, but center becomes a major concern because of a lack of depth or consistent scoring in the big games. Free agent losses could really deplete this already problematic area.

The strength of this team is its defense; the Hawks allowed just 95.3 points per game last season, third-lowest in the NBA. However, in order to make the playoffs, Lenny Wilkens' team will have to play to its maximum potential.

**Walton's take:** *Poor Lenny has his work cut out for him. He only wishes*

*he had some of those 1996 U.S. Olympians on his roster, instead of having to wait until next summer for a Pippen, Malone, or Olajuwon.*

## Milwaukee Bucks

**Where they left off:** The Bucks were 34-48 and missed the final playoff seed by one victory.

**Key personnel changes:** The Bucks acquired the rights to shooting guard Shawn Respert and center Eurelejus Zukauskas. Milwaukee lost power forward Ed Pinckney in the expansion draft. Center Alton Lister and small forward Johnny Newman are unrestricted free agents; point guards Lee Mayberry and Eric Murdock are restricted free agents.

**Brown says:** This team's offense is built around its two stars. Small forward Glenn Robinson is the complete package, averaging 21.9 points and 6.4 rebounds per game, with terrific perimeter range. Power forward Vin Baker averages 17.7 points, 10.3 rebounds, and 1.4 blocks—but he must improve at the line, where he shot just .593.

If the Bucks are to make the playoffs, center Eric Mobley must play more than 46 games—and he must produce in the games he plays. Rebounding and shot-blocking are primary needs; both Mobley and Marty Conlon constantly are overpowered in the paint.

However, the Achilles' heel for is the play of their backcourt. Mayberry, Murdock, Todd Day, and Jon Barry turned the ball over a lot and shot a combined 42%; they need to improve that number to at least 48%. Respert will help the perimeter game. He'll get every opportunity to play major minutes.

**Walton's take:** *The patience and wisdom of coach Mike Dunleavy will pay off in a surprising year for the Bucks that will quiet all of the Big Dog detractors.*



## Detroit Pistons

**Where they left off:** The Pistons went 28-54, were last in the East in road victories with six, and didn't make the playoffs.

**Key personnel changes:** Detroit drafted power forward Theo Ratliff, point guard Randolph Childress, small forward Lou Roe, and center Don Reid. Childress was traded to Portland for power forward Otis Thorpe. Center Oliver Miller went to Toronto in the expansion draft.

**Brown says:** The Pistons could have a very exciting starting unit with guards Joe Dumars and Allan Houston, forwards Thorpe and Grant Hill, and Mark West at center. Hill will be expected to assume a larger leadership role. He'll direct the team's offense as a point forward, the role Scottie Pippen has played for the Bulls in recent years.

A major concern is the depth and toughness of the front line. The addition of Thorpe—a consistent 16-point, 10-rebound player—Ratliff, Roe, and Reid will help there. Coach Doug Collins has assembled a team of slashers, shot-blockers, and guys who can run the floor, which will make Detroit a much better pressing and trap-

ping team defensively and open up things offensively. However, because the East has become much more competitive, the Pistons will face an uphill battle to make the playoffs.

**Walton's take:** *Hill needs a supporting cast to take care of the dirty work—rebounding and defense—if the Pistons are to make any noise.*

## Toronto Raptors

**Roster:** Point guards—Damon Stoudamire, Keith Jennings, B.J. Tyler. Off guards—Willie Anderson, Jimmy King. Small forwards—Jerome Kersey, Ed Pinckney, Carlos Rogers, Doug Smith, Dontonio Wingfield. Power forwards—Victor Alexander, Tony Massenburg, John Salley, Andres Guibert. Centers—Acie Earl, Oliver Miller, Zan Tabak.

**Brown says:** An expansion franchise obviously has to consider a lot of variables, but defensive rebounding, defense, and the development of players are your prime requisites. I expect the Raptors to be a full-court team, playing a pressing, trapping defensive style.

Coach Brendan Malone will field a relatively talented team. The backcourt will feature lottery pick Stoudamire—a great three-point shooter and a solid penetrator—at point guard; Jennings, a former Warriors point guard, will back him up. The off guard will be Anderson. The Raptors will run an uptempo offense to keep the games exciting, but they'll find it difficult to win. Not only is talent an issue, but developing respect with the referees is a major key at crunch time.

Toronto's frontcourt features size, quickness, and shot-blocking potential. It also has some very interesting prospects—and since the Raptors aren't expected to win anytime soon, don't be surprised if they package some of their frontcourt players in trades to contending teams in order to stockpile future draft picks.

**Walton's take:** *Too bad general manager Isiah Thomas can't play for this team, but his vision of the game should enable the Raptors to climb out of the cellar relatively early.* ■

Special contributors BILL WALTON and HUBIE BROWN worked with senior associate editor JOHN HAREAS on this article.

# THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE OR THE STADIUM.

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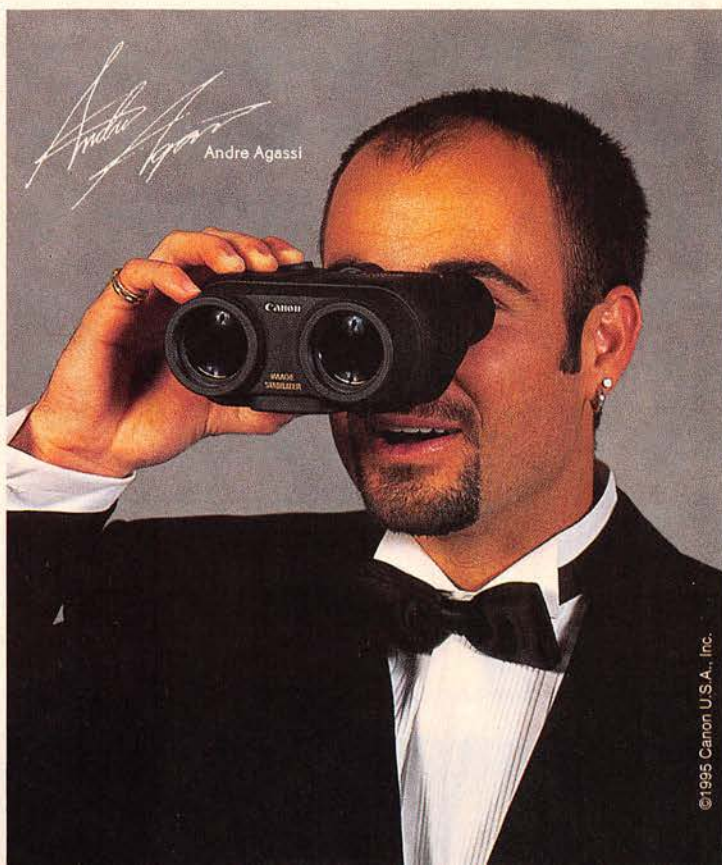
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*This includes but is not limited to: occupational obligations, household chores, personal hygiene, cognitive thinking processes, and addressing any children in the household by their names instead of, "Hey you, toss me the chips." (In other words, all things not associated directly or indirectly with watching college football.)*

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*This waiver remains active until the season's conclusion, sometime deep into the winter months.*

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(date)

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(witness)

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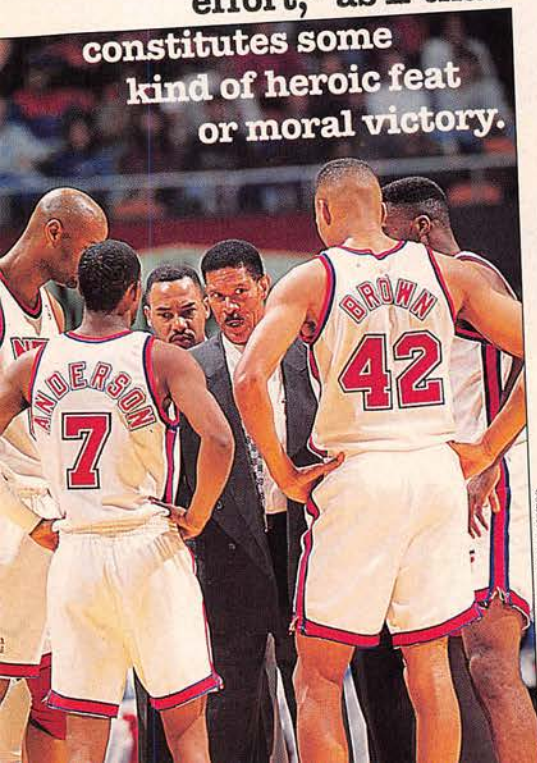
**T**HE VOICE FROM THE NEW Jersey Nets public relations office sounds every bit as anonymous and mechanical as one of those telephone messages that say, "The number you have reached is not in service..." Only this is the live voice of one "Christy," responding to a request for a phone interview with Nets coach Butch Beard. "He is in and out and unavailable," Christy says in sing-song cadence, apparently unaware of the non sequitur of being "in" and "out" and "unavailable" all at the same time. Willis Reed, the general manager? "He is in and out and unavailable," she repeats, sounding like a human metronome.

Several days earlier, in response to similar requests, the PR offices used the excuse of the labor dispute to say that Nets players were unavailable for interviews, despite the fact that two of them—Rick Mahorn and P.J. Brown—did consent to interview requests made through their agents. Still, according to the PR office, everyone—management, players, ball-boys—were in and out and unavailable.

Remember those words when considering the New Jersey Nets, a supposedly talented but certainly indifferent bunch who won a paltry 30 games last season and failed to make the playoffs for the sixth time in nine years. "In and out and unavailable." For a team that often fields just eight or nine players for practice—forcing assistant coach Jerry Eaves to suit up to give the team 10 bodies—that phrase has a special meaning.

Actually, "in and out and out to lunch"

**Beard praises "good effort," as if that constitutes some kind of heroic feat or moral victory.**



may better capture the commitment and mental outlook of New Jersey's most important players over the past several years. Last spring, guard Rex Walters said several of his teammates needed to "get their heads out of their asses." Brown, a forward, concurred, accusing certain players of "major attitude problems" and observing that the way some of his teammates played and practiced was a joke.

The powers that be aren't exactly following the seven principles of enlightened management. After losses, the painfully polite Beard seems pleased to tell the gathered press that his team "gave a good effort"—as if effort constitutes some kind of heroic feat or moral victory. No fines are levied against players who miss practices, who don't tie their shoelaces, or who perform with indifference. Draft picks are

kind of hard to swallow. Derrick Coleman, Kenny Anderson, Chris Morris? All were lottery picks, and all have talent any team would covet.

An alternative view—call it the "Player Accountability Theory"—says if they're ever to get the most out of their talent, the Nets players, particularly Coleman and Anderson, need to undergo a complete self-inventory and conduct themselves like, well, professionals. It also suggests players who think they've achieved greatness should check the stat sheets for a more realistic evaluation.

The "Managerial Malaise Theory" agrees with the previous but contends that the problem starts at the top. We might also call this the "Morris Theory," after the perennially discontented former Nets forward. During an interview after the final

# "Whoo damn

***When even Derrick Coleman, the New Jersey Nets' supposed superstar, doesn't care about his team, should anyone else?***  
**By KENNETH SHOULER**

baffling. And last year Nets management actually contemplated changing the team name to the "New Jersey Swamp Dragons."

Is there something in the air in East Rutherford, 12 miles from New York City? Do toxic fumes seep up from the surrounding swamps and turn players and management into zombies? Does this franchise suffer an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Knicks across the Hudson River? Is an eternal curse hanging over the club for its sale of Julius Erving to the Philadelphia 76ers in October 1976—the same way the Boston Red Sox offended the baseball gods when they sold Babe Ruth to the Yankees in 1919?

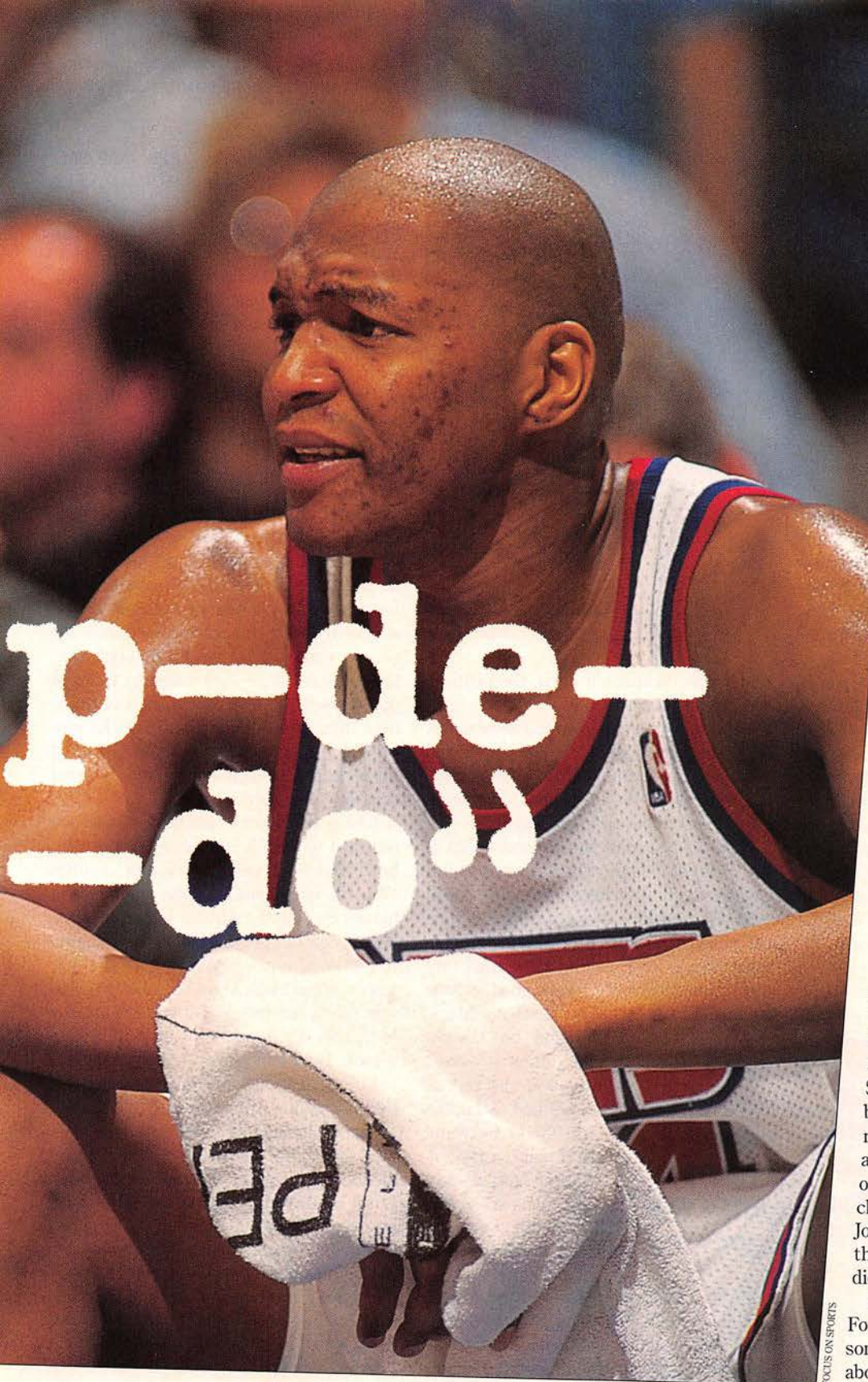
Where the blame lies depends on whom you listen to. Theories abound. One—call it the "Short on Ability Theory"—says that the Nets players just aren't as good as they're made out to be. That's

game of last season, Morris went off, referring to Nets management as "dumb and dumber" and saying that playing for the Nets is like living out "a death sentence."

You wonder if even after adding all three theories together, there isn't more to this team that needs explaining. Hall of Fame center and INSIDE SPORTS special contributor Bill Walton says the problem with the Nets is at the same time simpler and much more problematic. He lays the blame squarely at the feet of Coleman, the team's biggest talent and biggest star. "The only three positive things about the Nets are Butch Beard and Willis Reed and the nice arena they play in," Walton says. "I have nothing good to say about the Nets."

"To me it all comes down to what Derrick Coleman brings to a team. He's a player who plays for himself, and for all the wrong reasons. He plays for money, not for





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the joy or love of competition and for being part of a team. Until he changes his attitude, I just don't see things turning around with the Nets. When your star player has all the ability but has a bad attitude and a bad philosophy, it's virtually impossible to build a championship team.”

Walton has played for some of the best

coaches the sport has known, but even the likes of John Wooden or Jack Ramsay can't do much if the star player is intransigent. “The question you have to ask is, ‘Is Coleman going to change?’” Walton says. “The longer his behavior continues, the slimmer the chance he will do so. Every single coach—from the losing coaches to

the Hall of Fame coaches—says the same things. But you learn from coaches whom you have respect for, whom you believe in, who are doing the right things. Players like Derrick Coleman have rarely shown any respect for coaches, teammates, fans, or for the beauty of the sport of basketball.”

A rap sheet of absurd incidents involving the Nets over the last year defines the mental attitude of this team. Early last season Coleman missed practice when his 1950s-vintage car allegedly broke down on his drive in. Then, after Anderson was AWOL from practice, Coleman issued his famous response to a reporter's request for a comment: “Whoop-de-damn-do.” Anderson threw a fit after being removed in the fourth quarter of a game in favor of backup guard Chris Childs. Morris refused to tie his shoelaces. Coleman didn't want to wear a suit on Nets flights; he gave the team a blank check to cover an eventual \$40,000 in fines.

Coleman made his biggest splash when he labeled Utah Jazz power forward Karl Malone—the perennial All-Star, member of two Dream Teams, and paragon player at Coleman's position—an “Uncle Tom.” Malone, who has been scoring off assists from white teammate John Stockton for 10 years, was baffled by the remark but said little in response; he just came into town and thoroughly whipped Coleman on the court. “We gave him a chance to retract the remark,” says John Brennan, Nets beat writer for the *Bergen (N.J.) Record*. “But he didn't take it back.”

No, the Nets beat is never boring. For a team that went 30-52 last season, the scribes had plenty to write about. “It was truly the inmates running the asylum,” says Brennan. Adds *New York Daily News* writer Frank Isola, “With the lunatics on this team, I have to keep telling myself, ‘This is professional basketball.’”

Coleman's uninspired play against Malone mirrored countless similar games from the entire team. The Nets' 30-win season came on the heels of a 45-37 campaign

FOCUS ON SPORTS



in '93-94 and a 43-39 mark the season before. Had they played poorly in '93-94, they could have attributed it to the death in June 1993 of Drazen Petrovic, the shooting guard who seemed destined to become perhaps the best NBA player from Europe. "He was one of the best shooters in the history of the league," says I.S. special contributor and TNT analyst Hubie Brown. "He was a great percentage shooter and a high-percentage three-point and foul shooter. He always got his shot if the play broke down." Without Petrovic, though, New Jersey still made the playoffs in 1994.

And then came the beginning of the journey into the abyss.

The Nets had dominated the Knicks in the regular season, embarrassing them four games to one. Quite a rivalry had developed, and some predicted New Jersey would upset New York in the playoffs. Anderson was coming off his best season as a pro (18.8 points, 9.6 assists, 1.9 steals per game). He was a 1994 All-Star Game starter and seemed to be asserting himself as one of the league's best point guards.

But the Knicks were waiting for Anderson in the playoffs. They swarmed him and made him pick up his dribble. Knicks guards John Starks—who a year earlier had broken Anderson's wrist with a hard foul in the lane—and Derek Harper played bump-and-run with the much smaller Anderson, who made only 35% of his shots and 66% of his free throws in the series. His assist average dropped from nearly 10 during the season to 6.8 in the playoffs. If the 1993-94 regular season was

**Does an eternal curse hang over the club for selling Dr. J. to the '76ers?**



Anderson's coming-out party, the postseason was his hangover.

His numbers were down last season, too. Anderson made just 39.9% of his shots and averaged 17.6 points and 9.4 assists. Says Hubie Brown: "He is the most overrated guard ever to come into the league."

NBC analyst Matt Guokas was coach of the Orlando Magic when Anderson left Georgia Tech after his sophomore year in 1991. He chuckles as he recalls the comparisons of Anderson to Magic Johnson some people were making at the time. "We thought he might become as good as Nate Archibald," Guokas says. That's not Magic Johnson, but it's not bad, either. However, a look at the record shows that so far, the similarity between Archibald, a Hall-of-Famer, and Anderson stops at the fact that both stand 6'1" and weigh less than 170 pounds.

In his first four seasons in the league Archibald made 47% of his shots and averaged 24.9 points and 8.5 assists. In 1973 he became the first player to lead the league in points and assists in the same season. Along with Bob Cousy, Isiah Thomas, and Stockton, he's one of the great small guards in the history of the NBA.

Anderson's four-year numbers are nothing like Archibald's. The Nets guard has averaged 15.3 points and 7.8 assists—not bad for a point guard, but hardly Hall of Fame caliber. And his field goal percentage

is a paltry 41%. Here's how Anderson compared with other point guards in the league last season:

Player, Team	PPG	APG	Pct.
Anfernee Hardaway, Magic	20.9	7.2	.512
Gary Payton, SuperSonics	20.6	7.1	.509
Dana Barros, 76ers	20.6	7.5	.490
Tim Hardaway, Warriors	20.1	9.3	.427
Rod Strickland, Trail Blazers	18.9	8.8	.466
<b>Kenny Anderson, Nets</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>.399</b>
Mookie Blaylock, Hawks	17.2	7.7	.425
Nick Van Exel, Lakers	16.9	8.3	.420
Kevin Johnson, Suns	15.5	7.7	.470
Sherman Douglas, Celtics	14.7	6.9	.475
John Stockton, Jazz	14.7	12.3	.542
Avery Johnson, Spurs	13.4	8.2	.519
Scott Skiles, Bullets	13.0	7.3	.455

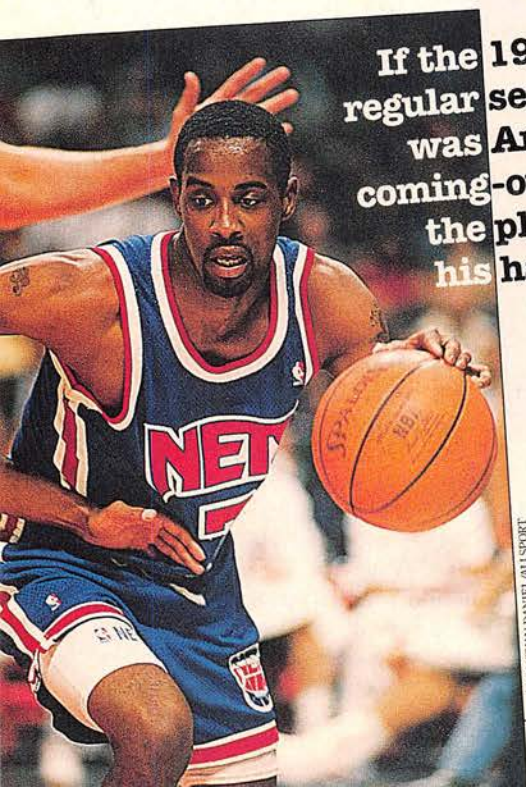
Coleman, on the other hand, has responded well to postseason pressure. In each of the three playoff series he has been in, he increased his scoring from the regular season. In the Knicks series in '94 he averaged 24.5 points, an increase from his season mark of 20.2, when he started in the All-Star Game—but Coleman took too many shots against New York and made less than 40% of them. The Knicks employed a gang-tackling defense, avenged their regular-season losses, and dumped the Nets three games to one.

Last year neither Coleman nor Anderson returned to the All-Star Game. Asked why, both blamed "politics." Guokas scoffs. "What is said about Coleman is a factor in his not making the All-Star team," he says. "When coaches get that ballot, they remember how players played against their teams. When I was a coach, I looked at who was overachieving. When you look at the Nets, they are down in the standings for a reason. Their star players are not doing it."

Coleman is all the more frustrating because of his immense talent. "When I look at Coleman, I think he has all the ability in the world," Guokas says. "He can handle the ball, post up, shoot outside, dish off. But it doesn't look like he's working hard, and then there's the reputation of not playing hard in practice. That filters down. He's not getting the most out of his talent. He has to look in the mirror and say, 'Why are they paying me all this money if I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing?'"

In Coleman people see a potential triple threat—a Scottie Pippen or a Larry Bird—who could achieve high numbers in scoring, rebounds, and assists. "There's no question there's more to DC than what you see," says teammate P.J. Brown. "He's one of the most talented forwards in the league. The passing and the dribbling—even Shawn Kemp can't do the things he does. I've only known him two years, but

**If the 1993-94 regular season was Anderson's coming-out party, the playoffs were his hangover.**



JOHNATHAN DANIEL/ALLSPORT



there's definitely more. He could be the No. 1 power forward. Malone is considered that, but there's no question he's better than Malone." Yet Coleman routinely is outplayed by Malone when they go head to head—and it doesn't go unnoticed.

"I focused on that matchup the last time we played," Brown says. "Malone outplayed him. He doesn't have all the talent DC has, but he's strong and fast, and it's like the wise vs. the young. The older you get, the wiser you have to be. Malone didn't try to outmuscle DC—you try to keep your physical attributes but try to use your head."

**I**f the worst things about the Nets since Petrovic's death in 1993 were a first-round playoff loss in 1994 and a disappointing 1994-95 season, you might attribute it to a psychological letdown over the loss of their well-liked shooting guard. But the trouble goes much deeper. Just look at their drafts.

In 1993 the Nets selected Walters ahead of Sam Cassell and Nick Van Exel. Walters averaged 3.4 points and eight minutes per game as a rookie, 6.5 points and 17.9 minutes in his second season. In contrast, Van Exel averaged 13.6 points and 33 minutes in his first season with the Los Angeles Lakers, and 16.9 points and 36.8 minutes in his second as he led L.A. on a surprising run in the playoffs; Cassell has played a crucial role in the Houston Rockets' consecutive championships. They're two of the best young point guards in the league.

Preparing for the 1994 draft, Nets management knew its greatest need was a shooting guard. Wesley Person was available when the Nets were to choose at No. 14 in the first round, and they were ready to select him. Then, at the last minute, Reed insisted the team select 7'1" center Yinka Dare, a native of Nigeria who had played two seasons at George Washington University. Dare's one field goal attempt in 1994-95—an airball—was evidence that the Nets had not found their shooting guard. To add insult to the injury that forced Dare to miss all but one game of his rookie season, the team left him available in the expansion draft, along with center Benoit Benjamin. Benjamin was picked by the Vancouver Grizzlies. Dare remains a Net.

Still, Guokas sees some reason in the Dare selection. "Other Eastern teams have the big centers, so the Nets wanted one too," he says. "There's no question he was raw, but you could see where they were coming from with that pick."

Person proved to be exactly what the Nets had needed—but he proved it with the Phoenix Suns. The 6'6" sniper averaged 10.4 points and 23 minutes as a rookie

and was accurate (43.6%) from three-point range. When Nets shooting guard Kevin Edwards suffered an injury after 14 games last season, the decision to pass on Person came back to haunt New Jersey.

Still, Walton dismisses much of this "blame management" thinking. "A lot of teams passed on Van Exel," he says. "And when I saw Dare early in his [college] career I was hugely impressed with his talent. He has raw talent and a giant upside."

**B**rown has had his fill of the rancor he and the Nets experienced in 1994-95. "I'm concerned about that 'underachiever' label attached to this team," he says. "I don't consider myself an underachiever at anything. I would like to try to erase that term."

The team has lost several players since last season. Benjamin, last year's starting center, is gone. So are Morris, Jayson Williams, and Dwayne Schintzius. Mahorn, close to the end of his career, remains unsigned. However, the Nets drafted UCLA's Ed O'Bannon, a great all-around player who can replace Morris at small forward (ignoring concerns about his arthritic knee), and they get back Edwards, who was averaging 14 points when he suffered an Achilles injury last year.

Management has displayed a newfound resolve. Following Morris' public criticism, Reed refused to re-sign him. Team president John Spoelstra sent a letter to season-ticket holders, saying the Nets were getting rid of players who didn't give an honest effort and didn't care about team success.

Before Reed let Morris leave, people wondered about his softness toward players. Knicks broadcaster Walt Frazier, who played on two title teams with Reed, couldn't believe the nonsense his former teammate was taking from his collection of enigmas and malcontents. Guokas, though, says it's not the GM's job to motivate, psychoanalyze, or baby-sit his players. "I grew up playing against Reed," Guokas says. "He was a fierce competitor—no nonsense, all business. He carries himself with dignity. I don't think Willis Reed should stomp around and carry a whip and get things done that way. It's not his responsibility. He tries to treat them like professionals."

Couldn't Reed levy more fines to punish bad behavior and get the players in line? "Coleman laughs at that," Walton says.

Mahorn has been on teams with "bad" attitude before—the Pistons of Thomas, Bill Laimbeer, Dennis Rodman, Mark Aguirre, et al.—but "bad" for those championship Detroit teams meant guys came to practice and to the games to do a job. "I got

my hard hat on and we went to work," Mahorn says. The implication is that the Nets lack the kind of drive and leadership it takes to win.

"I hope everyone comes with a new attitude this year," says Brown, the Nets' leading shot-blocker last season. "I thought last year that everyone could have put out a lot more—not just Kenny and DC. I think I can help with that leadership and be a little more vocal."

**Dare's one shot—an airball—was proof that the Nets had not found their shooting guard.**



LOU CAROZZA/NEA PHOTOS

"The Nets can turn around, but it's up to Coleman," Walton says. "It has to be a personal thing to change. He has to look himself in the mirror and say 'I am not happy with being the league's highest-paid player on a team that doesn't win.'"

Coleman, entering his sixth season, must turn his attitude around. Anderson must return to the form that made him an All-Star two years ago and assert his leadership. Management gave him the wheel of the team, but he has failed to steer it.

If the Nets continue to wallow in the ineptitude of last season, the jokes that now are heaved at the Nets in the New York area will be directed at a franchise across the Hudson that deserves them more. ■

KENNETH SHOULER wrote about the maturation of Orlando Magic center Shaquille O'Neal on and off the court in the June 1995 issue of INSIDE SPORTS.



# An Insider's October

*To get the skinny on all the contenders in the race to the World Series, we asked two big-league managers who have been there*

**American League Analysis by TOM KELLY**  
**National League Analysis by JIM LEYLAND**

## AMERICAN LEAGUE CLEVELAND INDIANS

**You Gotta Like:** Cleveland and the Boston Red Sox are well-balanced teams that have similar trademarks: strong lineups with balance between left-handed and right-handed hitters. The Indians have speed at the top of the order in Kenny Lofton and Omar Vizquel, they're strong up the middle defensively, and they have all kinds of power throughout the lineup.

**Warning Sign:** Some baseball people think that left-handed starters have a better chance to beat Cleveland, but with this lineup—a good balance of left-handed and right-handed hitters—the Indians are capable of beating anybody, no matter who they face in the playoffs.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The Indians are very dangerous in a short series—capable of scoring runs in bunches. They also have the ability to come back and win games in the late innings, a quality they've shown all season. They have a good mix of veteran and younger players. Lofton is one of their biggest advantages; keeping him off base is a big key to any short series, because pitching against their lineup becomes double trouble if he gets on base. Vizquel can cause problems, too, but not on the magnitude of Lofton.

## BOSTON RED SOX

**You Gotta Like:** Boston, like Cleveland, has a well-balanced lineup, with speed and power. Perhaps most important, the Red Sox have shown they can hit in clutch situations late in the game—a must for any team in the postseason. Like most teams that have seasons like the one Boston has had, a lot of Red Sox players are having outstanding years at the same time. The

right side of the infield—shortstop John Valentin and third baseman Tim Lincecum—has played the field and hit extremely well. Troy O'Leary, Lee Tinsley, Mo Vaughn, Jose Canseco, and Mike Greenwell have been consistent and always are dangerous. Willie McGee has been a great addition, and Mike Macfarlane is very dangerous—he's a big threat in clutch situations late in the game.

**Warning Sign:** I don't see the Red Sox having any disadvantages. They are very good. An injury to a key starting pitcher would endanger their chances, though, and Roger Clemens and Erik Hanson have been hurt some. That's possibly the only thing that could damage them. Boston's defense isn't the best in the league, but the offense can make up for most miscues.

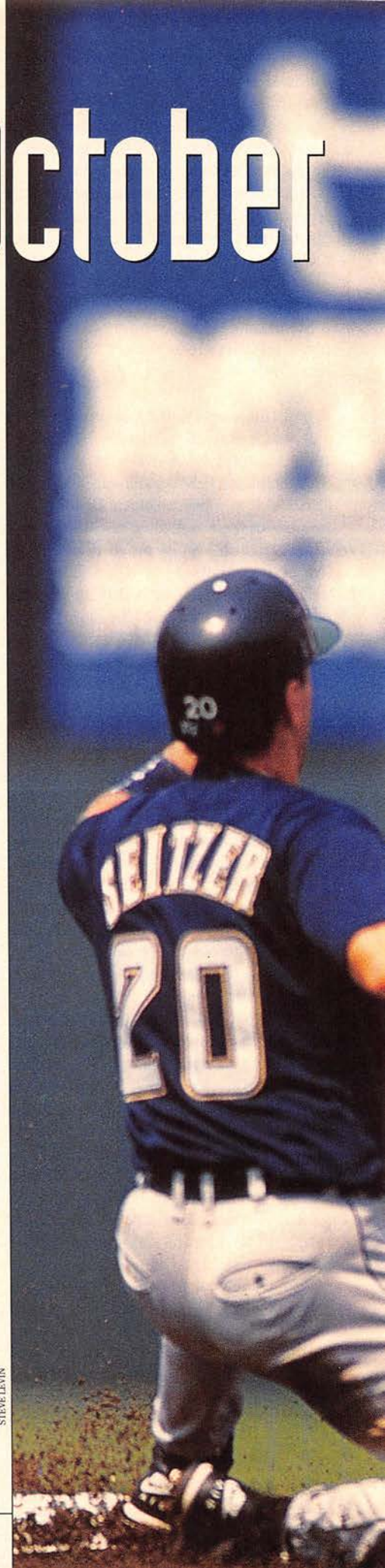
**The Short-Series Factor:** The pitching staff is very solid, with Clemens, Hanson, and Tim Wakefield starting, and Rick Aguilera coming in at the end. Long relief is Boston's only suspect spot—but if you need long relief, you're probably in trouble anyway. Also, with the Red Sox enjoying a big lead in the standings down the stretch, they should be well-prepared for the playoffs.

## CALIFORNIA ANGELS

**You Gotta Like:** The big key for the Angels is leadoff man Tony Phillips. Keeping him off base is important. He sets the table for the rest of the lineup, which becomes much better if he reaches.

Don't underestimate the Angels lineup. The middle of the order is loaded, and California has the advantage of having two switch-hitters in the middle: Chili Davis

**At the plate and in the field, Vizquel's Indians have been flying high all year.**



STEVE LEVIN







and J.T. Snow. Center fielder Jim Edmonds is having a great year, maybe even an MVP year. Left fielder Garret Anderson has a great shot at rookie of the year.

**Warning Sign:** The Angels have some speed, but not a lot. The loss of shortstop Gary DiSarcina will hurt. He was having a fine season, with both the bat and the glove. The Angels have power, but I don't think they have as much as the other contenders. Injuries to some of their starting pitchers may catch up to them, and their middle relief could be a question mark.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The Angels are strong at the end of the game, with Lee Smith and Troy Percival in the bullpen, but the key will be their top two starters: Mark Langston and Chuck Finley *must* win. If they don't, the Angels are in trouble. Left-handed starters will have a better chance to beat the Angels than righthanders.

## TEXAS RANGERS

**You Gotta Like:** The Rangers have an explosive club. They can score runs in a hurry, and in bunches. They have speed at the top of the lineup with Otis Nixon and Mark McLemore, and they follow those two with quality hitters in Will Clark, Juan Gonzalez, Mickey Tettleton, and Ivan Rodriguez. All of those guys can lose the ball over the fence, so it's important to keep Nixon and McLemore off the bases; those two make the middle of the lineup work. Rusty Greer has developed into a force, and Benji Gil has gotten better as his rookie year has progressed.

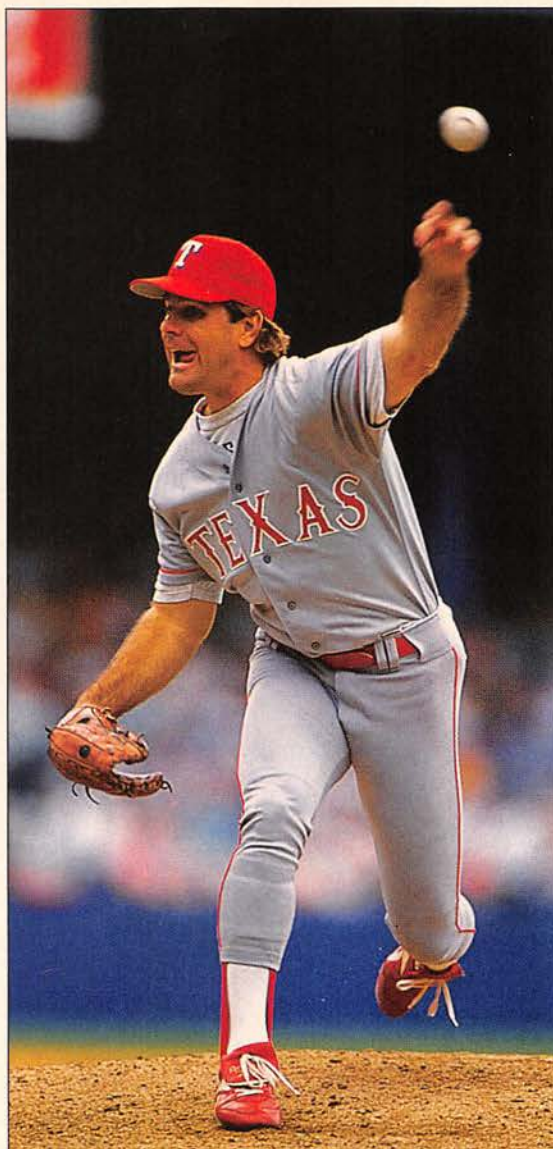
**Warning Sign:** The injury to third baseman Dean Palmer hurt the Rangers. He was set to have a big year. Pitchers Bob Tewksbury, Bobby Witt, and Kenny Rogers must be at the top of their games for the Rangers to compete, and closer Jeff Russell must remain healthy to give the Rangers someone to lock up the games at the end.

**The Short-Series Factor:** Texas has plenty of power, but it's mandatory that the Rangers get great starting pitching and solid defense if they're going to win.

## SEATTLE MARINERS

**You Gotta Like:** The Mariners bullpen can be very good. Jeff Nelson is having his best season. Bill Risley throws hard. Norm Charlton and Bobby Ayala can get it done at the end of the game. Seattle also has two of the best hitters in the game: Edgar Martinez is one of the top clutch hitters around, and Ken Griffey Jr. is back into game shape after recovering from his broken wrist.

**Warning Sign:** The Mariners' defense hasn't been perfect, but Seattle has the



Rogers and the rest of the Rangers starters must be in top form for Texas to make noise.

offense to offset the problems in the field.

**The Short-Series Factor:** With Randy Johnson and Andy Benes, the starting pitching puts Seattle in a strong position to win a short series. In addition, the middle of their order is particularly tough to pitch to this year. Mike Blowers is having a super season, and you simply cannot make a mistake to Jay Buhner. Tino Martinez has turned into one of the better players in the game. When the bottom of the order comes up, the Mariners like to use the hit-and-run.

## NEW YORK YANKEES

**You Gotta Like:** New York has two ace-type starters in David Cone and Jack McDowell—guys who know how to win and have been in the postseason. The Yankees have good left-handed hitters and a deep lineup, and they've got a lot of hitters who know how to play the game and

know how to take advantage of mistakes: Don Mattingly, Wade Boggs, Paul O'Neill, and Mike Stanley. They have power from the left side of the plate and a deep bullpen with John Wetteland, Steve Howe, and Bob Wickman.

**Warning Sign:** The Yankees don't have a lot of speed, and they've had to depend on some young starting pitching. They need to have another veteran starter besides Cone or McDowell ready to go in the playoffs.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The veteran aces could dominate a short series. The Yankees have a few good short men in the bullpen, and they have some veterans who know how to win. Given what they've gone through this season, if they make the playoffs they could be tough in October—because they'll have gotten past the toughest part of the year for them.

## MILWAUKEE BREWERS

**You Gotta Like:** The Brewers have done a great job and have surprised a lot of people. They found some starting pitchers who've all done commendable jobs: Brian Givens, Steve Sparks, Jamie McAndrew, and Scott Karl. And Ricky Bones has been a staff leader since they lost their

No. 1 starter, Cal Eldred, early in the season with an arm injury.

Two keys to Milwaukee's success are defense and clutch hitting. The Brewers don't give up a lot of unearned runs due to errors, and their hitters were near the top of the majors all season in producing with runners in scoring position. With B.J. Surhoff, Darryl Hamilton, Dave Nilsson, John Jaha, and Kevin Seitzer, the Brewers lineup is better than a lot of people think. Phil Garner and his staff have done a superb job of keeping the team competitive.

**Warning Sign:** The pitching staff is the key. The starters have to pitch outstanding baseball if Milwaukee is to advance.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The Brewers have experienced hitters in Hamilton, Seitzer, Jaha, Surhoff, and Joe Oliver. And Jose Valentin, Fernando Vina, David Hulse, and Jeff Cirillo can contribute with hit-and-run ability, as well as base-stealing.



Meat, potatoes  
And that's just

and vegetables.  
one spoonful.



You get a fast, square meal every time you lift the spoon.

Soup that eats like a meal.®



## NATIONAL LEAGUE

### ATLANTA BRAVES

**You Gotta Like:** That starting pitching. Because Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, John Smoltz, and Steve Avery are so good, this is not a streaky team. It's a consistent, grind-it-out club. There's nothing flamboyant or tricky about Atlanta. The Braves seem to take a while to get going each year—they were five games out in late June—but once they get rolling they keep steadily moving along.

With their great starting pitching, and reliever Mark Wohlers looking like he finally has come of age, they're going to be in just about every game. Even when they were beating our Pirates teams in the playoffs in '91 and '92, there were concerns about the bullpen. Those problems seem to have cleared up. When a guy with Wohlers' stuff gets his confidence, it's a big plus for a team.

This team doesn't get emotional. That's a tone set by the manager. Bobby Cox never appears to get excited. He gives you the feeling he knows how things are going to work out—and most of the time they do, especially against a right-handed pitcher. If you have a righthander going against Atlanta, you better hope he pitches well. Their big four—Fred McGriff, David Justice, Chipper Jones, and Ryan Klesko—can go up there from the left side and get on the scoreboard quick.

**Warning Sign:** This is not as much of a two-way offensive club as it was when Otis Nixon and then Deion Sanders were with Atlanta. But if the big guys continue to provide the big hits, the Braves will be fine. Klesko is showing he can handle left-handed pitching, too.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The pitching

staff is always going to keep the Braves close, so it won't take much to put them over the hump. They can have offensive slumps and still win, because with those arms it doesn't take many runs. I've seen those guys in pressure situations first-hand, and they pitch their asses off.

### CINCINNATI REDS

**You Gotta Like:** This is the best two-way offensive club in the league—the Reds can beat you with their legs or with their power. That's why I have to give them the edge offensively over Atlanta. Manager Davey Johnson does a great job turning those guys loose. He knows they can live by the stolen base or home run, whichever is working for them. The Reds' middle infield combination of Larkin at short and Bret Boone at second is outstanding. Although I'm still a Barry Bonds fan when you talk about the best player in the game, you can make a strong argument for Barry Larkin. Larkin certainly is in contention for MVP this year. I have tons of respect for the way he goes about his business.

Jeff Brantley is quietly one of the best relief pitchers in the league. John Smiley is in that Bret Saberhagen class. He doesn't walk anybody, and he keeps his team in the game. When a pitcher knows his team is going to score runs, he's more relaxed and ends up allowing fewer runs. Picking up David Wells from Detroit was tremendous, and getting Dave Burba from San Francisco, with Darren Lewis and Mark Portugal, was a great move. The Reds have been very aggressive in that regard. Cincinnati has a nice bench, too. Davey uses a lot of combinations, which keeps everybody in the game.

**Warning Sign:** Cincinnati lost its ace,

Jose Rijo, who underwent arm surgery. However, the Reds do have some guys with decent arms who are having good years.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The Reds are a good match for Atlanta. They have the left-handed starters in Wells, Smiley, and Pete Schourek, which creates a good challenge for the Atlanta lineup. And they have the speed to steal a run and to give the team a lift on defense; they can run down some balls that would fall in against other teams.

### LOS ANGELES DODGERS

**You Gotta Like:** The starting pitching. Ramon Martinez, Hideo Nomo, and Ismael Valdes are young power pitchers; throw in knuckleballer Tom Candiotti, and the Dodgers are capable of piling up a lot of quality innings. Much is said about the defense being a little short, but with the pitchers getting 10 or 12 strikeouts a game, you're only talking about 17 or 15 outs for the fielders to get, and some of those are fly balls. Kevin Tapani has given L.A. a solid five-man rotation.

**Warning Sign:** The Dodgers need to diversify the offense a little. Chad Fonville really sparked them when he started playing regularly in August. He gives them some speed up front to go with their power, and Los Angeles became a little more creative on the bases, not living and dying with the home run as the team had been. The Dodgers are a lot like Colorado in the reliance on the long ball, but with Fonville playing, Delino DeShields back, plus Brett Butler, Jose Offerman, and Raul Mondesi, they can put some base-stealing pressure on you.

**The Short-Series Factor:** L.A.'s starting pitching can dominate, and Todd Worrell is a dominant closer. The middle-line pitching is young, and time will tell whether it can hold up in the heat of the pennant race and the playoffs. For the most part, though, with their starting pitching the Dodgers only need one setup guy to get a couple outs and carry the game to Worrell.

### COLORADO ROCKIES

**You Gotta Like:** The power in the Rockies lineup, especially in Coors Field. Anybody in their lineup can hit it out at home, but the big four—Larry Walker, Dante Bichette, Andres Galarraga, and Vinny Castilla—can go deep anywhere. That's a lot of offense in a hurry. They also have an aggressive manager in Don Baylor. He's

**Letter man:** Nomo's ability to pile up the K's makes up for all those Dodgers E's.







**Bichette leads a Rockies bomb squad in Coors Field, but the charge often fizzles on the road.**

not afraid to force the issue. Even with all that power, he's doesn't sit back and wait.

When a manager goes into Coors Field, the one thing he must avoid is changing his team's style. If you're a running team, you still have to run. If you don't continue to run, you find yourself waiting for the three-run homer, and it might not come. Don has avoided getting into that trap.

Colorado has a solid defense, anchored by shortstop Walt Weiss. He's a big part of why things have turned around defensively.

**Warning Sign:** The record shows the Rockies are a different club at home than on the road. They don't have to dominate on the road, but they have to be competitive. They have a good offensive game plan at home: They take advantage of their park, knowing they don't have to pull everything. That would work on the road, too; those guys are strong enough. It's probably a matter of confidence more than anything else. If the Rockies can avoid falling into some kind of a road phobia, they could surprise people in the playoffs.

**The Short-Series Factor:** With a healthy Bret Saberhagen and Billy Swift to anchor the rotation, Colorado could pull off an upset. Both are proven winners, and neither will feel the pressure; if you get those two guys on a roll in October, they can carry the staff. Plus, with the first two games in the first round at home—and a possible home-field advantage in the

National League Championship Series—the Rockies could build some momentum.

## HOUSTON ASTROS

**You Gotta Like:** The Astros lineup—when Jeff Bagwell is in it. They need him, though. Bagwell and Craig Biggio are a tandem. Bagwell provides two-way offense, and Biggio may be my favorite player—he and Barry Larkin just go about their business. Bagwell can pound the ball out of the park, and Biggio will hit some home runs, too. Derek Bell has shown he's capable of doing an outstanding job.

And the Astros are very aggressive on the bases. When you get to crunch time, you're going to be seeing a damn good pitcher every game. Unless you're Atlanta, you've got to create some runs to beat that, and Houston has the speed to do so.

**Warning Sign:** The young kids have to mature in a hurry. Houston doesn't have much in between: The players are either very experienced or hardly experienced at all. Brian Hunter has been great, but he's still young; so are James Mouton, Orlando Miller, and Tony Eusebio.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The Astros are as capable as anybody, especially if Darryl Kile gets straightened out on the mound. I've seen him dominate. A rotation of Doug Drabek, Kile, Shane Reynolds, Greg Swindell, and Mike Hampton can compete with anybody. Houston shored up the bullpen by adding Mike Henneman to go with Todd Jones.

## PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

**You Gotta Like:** The veteran nucleus, although the Phillies took big hits when first Lenny Dykstra and then Darren Daulton went down for the season with injuries. In Andy Van Slyke, Gregg Jefferies, Mickey Morandini, and Jim Eisenreich, you're talking about quality big-league guys. In spring training it looked like this team was going to be an offensive machine, but it has had some trouble. Still, those guys have the ability to step it up.

**Warning Sign:** The Phillies have been Jekyll and Hyde this season. Because of the inconsistency they've shown, I couldn't put them quite in the class of Atlanta and Cincinnati. At one point the Pirates had

scored more runs than Philadelphia—that blew my mind, and having talked to manager Jim Fregosi I know he was puzzled, too. The addition of veteran Sid Fernandez did help stabilize a young pitching staff.

**The Short-Series Factor:** You don't know which Phillies team is going to show up. Fregosi is a great manager who has won a pennant, but losing Dykstra and Daulton was a big blow. Dykstra wasn't having a big year, but if you get to crunch time and you have a healthy Lenny Dykstra, you feel pretty good about your chances.

## CHICAGO CUBS

**You Gotta Like:** Their everyday lineup. Shawon Dunston, Sammy Sosa, and Mark Grace have had big years. Brian McRae was a great acquisition: a two-way offensive player and fine center fielder with a tenacity the Cubs needed. They also picked up a much-needed left-handed hitter in Luis Gonzalez. Todd Zeile doesn't say much, but he drives in runs. The Cubs aren't flamboyant, but you get their lineup card in the manager's office before the game, and you say, "Damn, that's a pretty good team."

**Warning Sign:** Their lead starters haven't proved enough for me to put them in the Cincinnati-Atlanta class. But if they come through, look out, because the Cubs have a veteran closer in Randy Myers. He's probably not throwing as well as he once did, but he's still capable and knows what to do to get outs on days he doesn't have good stuff. He has no fear and a lot of guts.

**The Short-Series Factor:** The starting pitching is a concern. But are the Cubs a legitimate long shot? Damn right.

## SAN DIEGO PADRES

**You Gotta Like:** The job manager Bruce Bochy has done. He's been very patient. There's no panic. He has three franchise-type players in Ken Caminiti, Tony Gwynn, and Steve Finley. Are they experienced enough? I don't know, but they're close. Bochy has those guys playing hard. Trevor Hoffman has a great arm out of the bullpen, Andy Ashby really has come on, and Joey Hamilton is a good pitcher. You have to like catcher Brad Ausmus, too; he's an asset behind the plate.

**Warning Sign:** The pitchers are young, but if they continue to develop, things can happen.

**The Short-Series Factor:** I don't consider the Padres quite in the same category as Atlanta or Cincinnati, but they can get there. They play the game the right way. ■

Senior writer TRACY RINGOLSBY and contributor JIM SOUHAN worked on this article.



# Braced for a Breakout

**Who'll carry the NFL  
into the next decade?  
These are the guys the  
league's talent experts  
say to watch out for**  
**By STEVE HUBBARD**

**B**UCKO KILROY HAS drawn NFL paychecks as a player, coach, or scout since 1943. If it's happened in professional football since World War II, chances are Kilroy was there. He's seen every great runner from Bronko Nagurski to Barry Sanders—and Kilroy, a consultant for the New England Patriots, says Marshall Faulk, in just one season, already deserves a place among the top 10 or 15 backs in history.

Ted Marchibroda has been playing or coaching in the NFL since 1953. He pre-dates the great inventions of our time: VCRs and PCs, microwaves and faxes. He played with Ollie Matson, a Hall of Fame runner and Olympic champion sprinter. He has coached Walter Payton, Billy Sims, Thurman Thomas, Larry Brown, and Lydell Mitchell—and he says Faulk accelerates faster than any back in his experience.

"He goes faster quicker than anybody I've ever seen," says the Indianapolis Colts coach. "Not just from a standing start, but the ability to dart and come to a complete stop, then go full speed again almost immediately. This guy has amazing quickness, amazing darting ability."

You knew about Faulk, the second choice in the 1994 draft and the runaway rookie of the year. And you know about Drew Bled-

soe, the first player drafted in '93 and a Pro Bowl quarterback by '94. They're not just tomorrow's stars—they're stars of today. They headline any list of rising players.

Plenty of other youngsters are ready for breakthrough years, too—ready to burst from anonymous players to unanimous stars, the way Natrone Means, Leroy Hoard, Errict Rhett, Terance Mathis, Ben Coates, Chester McGlockton, Merton Hanks, and Darren Woodson have the past two years. We polled pro coaches and scouts to discover the hidden and not-so-hidden stars of '95, the guys who will break through this season. Here's who we found:

## Running Backs

With top draft pick **Ki-Jana Carter** of the Cincinnati Bengals out for the season,

**Yeah, it's early—but what Faulk has shown NFL lifers is the stuff of Canton.**





no rookie runner figures to come close to **Marshall Faulk's** 1,282 yards of a season ago. Heisman Trophy winner **Rashaan Salaam**, the first-round pick of the Chicago Bears, will get a chance, but it's doubtful he has the linemen or the quick moves to be truly special. Detroit Lions personnel director Ron Hughes says Salaam "has a chance to be something special" but adds that the Colorado product is "not a real nifty guy." The Bears also want to get the ball 10 to 15 times a game to **Raymont Harris**, who calls himself the "ultraback." Rich McKay, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers vice president of football operations, thinks Harris could have a breakthrough season if he gets enough carries.

**James "Little Man" Stewart** could be a big man in Jacksonville if the expansion Jaguars could only block, which they can't. New York Giants rookie **Tyrone Wheatley** will run behind a good line; he'll share the ball with veteran Rodney Hampton.

Oakland Raiders rookie **Napoleon Kaufman** will share it with **Harvey Williams**. Kaufman is a tough little guy with a "great burst" who reminds Raiders defensive coordinator John Fox of James Brooks. Says Fox: "He may get you two yards, one yard, and then boom—there's a 30-yarder." Williams, the Kansas City Chiefs' No. 1 draft choice in 1991, emerged last year with 983 yards and 47 catches in just 10 starts. He, Kaufman, and line coach Joe Bugel give the Raiders their best running attack in years.

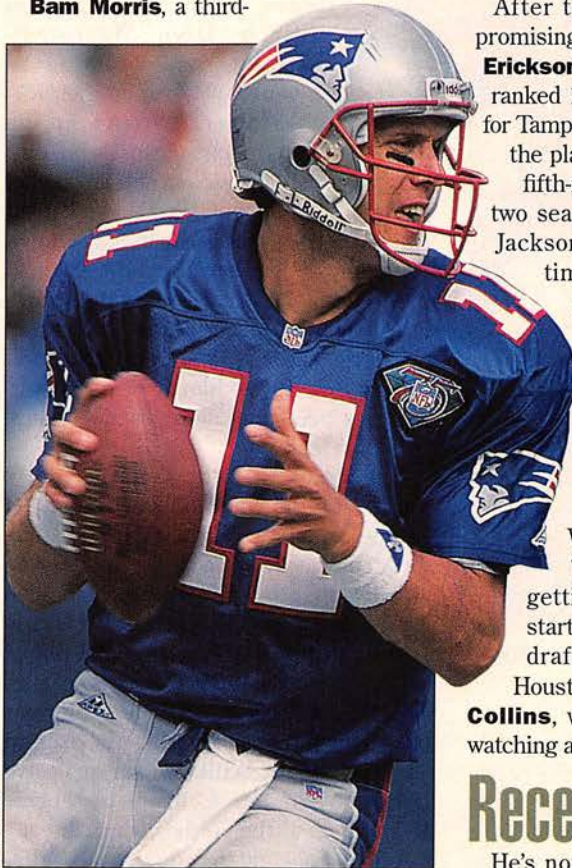
San Diego Chargers personnel director Billy Devaney picks Williams as a breakout back this season. Why? "Two words: Joe Bugel," he says. "The best offseason acquisition—player, coach, anybody—was Bugel going to the Raiders. It's not Andre Rison to the Cleveland Browns or any of the other marquee players. Bugel is the best line coach that ever was."

Devaney also predicted big things for Broncos scatback **Glyn Milburn**, who'll catch a ton of passes in Denver's new "West Coast" offense. Broncos sixth-round pick **Terrell Davis** and Patriots third-round pick **Curtis Martin** could be this season's rookie surprises. The third-year surprise could be **Garrison Hearst**, whose first two seasons with the Arizona Cardinals were practically wiped out by injuries.

The best young back in the NFC Central figures to be Tampa Bay's **Errict Rhett**, who ran for 1,011 yards despite just eight starts in '94. Rhett rushed for 192 yards against the Washington Redskins, had four 100-yard efforts in a five-game stretch, and drew comparisons to Emmitt Smith. McKay says Rhett is being featured more this year and is "one of the most well-conditioned athletes you'll ever be around."

Steve Ortmyer, St. Louis Rams vice president for football operations, predicts the New Orleans Saints' 1994 No. 2 draft choice, **Mario Bates**, is headed for a 1,200-yard year if he stays healthy. Bates missed the start of last season when teammate Lorenzo Neal broke his jaw in a bar-room brawl, but the big back with 4.4 speed nevertheless tied three Saints records and set a team rookie mark with 141 yards vs. the Atlanta Falcons.

**Bam Morris**, a third-



After the phenomenal Bledsoe, the list of quality young passers is short.

round heist for the Pittsburgh Steelers in '94, ran for 836 yards while sharing the rushing load with Barry Foster last season. "If Bam played the whole year he'd be a Pro Bowl guy," said Michael Dean Perry, who faced Morris three times as a defensive tackle for the Cleveland Browns in '94. With Foster out of the way, Morris is getting the chance.

The best big back figures to be 49ers fullback **William Floyd**, even though he was slowed early by sprained knee ligaments. The 49ers expect him to live up to his nickname and become the league's best fullback, "Bar None."

## Quarterbacks

**Drew Bledsoe** set an NFL season record for pass attempts and single-game marks in attempts and completions. His

400 completions in 1994 ranked second all-time for a season, and his 4,555 passing yards eighth. Yet he was only 22 years old and in his first full season as a starter.

**Rick Mirer**, the second pick overall behind Bledsoe in '93, will show vast improvement now that he's running Dennis Erickson's sophisticated passing game and now that the Seahawks have rookies Joey Galloway and Christian Fauria and veteran Ricky Proehl in their receiving corps.

After those two, though, the list of promising quarterbacks fades fast. **Craig Erickson**, a fourth-round draft pick in '92, ranked 10th in passer rating last season for Tampa Bay and could lead the Colts to the playoffs this year. **Mark Brunell**, a fifth-round pick who barely played in two seasons with Green Bay, could be Jacksonville's quarterback for a long time. **Jeff Blake**, a sixth-round pick who wasted two years on the Jets bench, was spectacular in his first three starts for Cincinnati last season before multiple defenses baffled him. This year we'll see if he's for real, or too short and erratic.

The 1994 first-round QBs, Washington's **Heath Shuler** and Tampa Bay's **Trent Dilfer**, are getting their chances as full-time starters this season; this year's No. 1 draft picks, **Steve McNair** of the Houston Oilers and Carolina's **Kerry Collins**, will spend most of the season watching and learning.

## Receivers

He's not well-known yet because the Bengals have bungled so much, but **Carl Pickens** blossomed into a great receiver when Jeff Blake gave Cincinnati a big-play quarterback. If you project Pickens' performance in the final seven games of 1994 over a full season, he'd have 110 catches for 1,785 yards and 21 touchdowns.

As it was, Pickens broke the club record for receiving touchdowns, tied the club record for receptions, and finished fourth in club history in season receiving yards. He led AFC receivers in scoring and led the NFL in catches of 50-plus yards with six. His spectacular 11-catch, 188-yard, three-touchdown day against Houston prompted veteran defensive coordinator Larry Peccatiello of the Bengals to say: "When you consider how many of those 11 were great catches, I've never seen a receiver have that good a day—and I've been on teams with Steve Largent, Art Monk, and Charlie Joiner."

Pickens pairs with **Darnay Scott** to give Cincinnati the league's best tandem of





AL MEISSERSCHMIDT

**Conway is starting to hit his stride, justifying Chicago's high pick.**

young receivers. They both have great athleticism, leaping ability, and big-play potential. Scott led rookies in receiving yards and the AFC in yards per catch in 1994. "They're already stars," says Browns personnel director Mike Lombardi. "By the second game, we were devising plans to slow or stop Scott. When they split to opposite sides, it's tough to double either one."

Another AFC Central receiver, Pittsburgh's **Charles Johnson**, caught 38 balls while playing part-time last season, but he'll do much better as a sophomore because he has greatly improved his routes. He's replacing Eric Green as the Steelers' go-to receiver, and the team will open up the offense a little. Steelers All-Pro cornerback Rod Woodson says Johnson is as good as anybody he's covered.

Two other 1994 No. 1 draft picks, the Giants' **Thomas Lewis** and the Lions' **Johnnie Morton**, are ready to show themselves as both receivers and returners. And Ortmayer says **Isaac Bruce**, a 1994 Rams second-rounder, can be a star: "He has big-league quickness and the ability to adjust to the ball."

**Bert Emanuel** of the Falcons, another second-year second-rounder, caught 46

passes while making the transition from college quarterback to NFL receiver. "He had a solid year for us, and now that he knows our system he'll be able to utilize his natural abilities even further," says Falcons coach June Jones.

The Bears drafted **Curtis Conway** high in 1993 knowing he was a project. Now he's ready to turn potential into production. "He's showed more maturity and has caught everything thrown at him," says Chicago coach Dave Wannstedt. "There's no reason he can't be our big-play guy on offense."

**Robert Brooks**, in his fourth season in Green Bay, will catch a lot of passes in an offense that features one receiver. Third-year Patriot **Vincent Brisby** also should see addition from subtraction, because New England must replace the 191 catches of the departed Michael Timpson, Leroy Thompson, and Kevin Turner. "He's pretty good, and the guy throwing to him is awfully good," says Jets personnel director Dick Haley. "He could jump out."

Speedster **Rocket Ismail** finally learned how to run routes last year, and he's poised for a good season for the Raiders. Devaney says San Diego's **Andre Coleman**, a big-play return man, also will make a lot of big plays as the Chargers' third or fourth receiver. Vikings defensive coordinator Tony Dungy predicts **David Palmer** will have "a big year as a kick returner and Warren Moon's third receiver." **Kevin Williams**, an explosive kick returner, gets a chance to replace Alvin Harper as the Cowboys' deep threat.

Among rookies, Seattle's **Joey Gallo** and Arizona's **Frank Sanders** figure to have the biggest impact, since fourth overall pick **Michael Westbrook** held out for most of the Redskins' training camp, and **J.J. Stokes** missed the early part of the season because of a broken hand. Promising young tight ends besides New England's **Ben Coates** include the Rams' **Troy Drayton**, the Saints' **Irv Smith**, the Jets' **Kyle Brady**, and the Steelers' **Mark Bruener**.

## Offensive Linemen

After the Browns allowed a league-low 14 sacks in 1994, left tackle **Tony Jones** somehow was ignored in the Pro Bowl balloting but made Second Team All-Pro. Now the Browns think their right tackle, **Orlando Brown**, is ready for similar achievements. Nicknamed "Zeus" because

of his mythic proportions, Brown comes from a neighborhood so tough they kill people twice. (He attended a funeral where gang members came in and machine-gunned the casket.) "He is a dominant run-blocker, he has incredible size, and he's tough," Lombardi says.

Like Jones, Falcons tackle **Bob Whitfield** was overlooked for the Pro Bowl last year, but he won't be for much longer. "He had a Pro Bowl-caliber season," Jones says. "Now people are beginning to realize just how good he really is."

The NFL's best young tackle is **William Roaf**, already a Pro Bowler for the Saints, but he soon might be passed by Jacksonville's **Tony Boselli**, the second player drafted this year, once Boselli recovers from a preseason injury. Other good young linemen include Minnesota's **Todd Steussie**, Buffalo's **Ruben Brown**, Cleveland's **Steve Everitt**, Dallas' **Larry Allen**, and Carolina's **Blake Brockermeyer**.

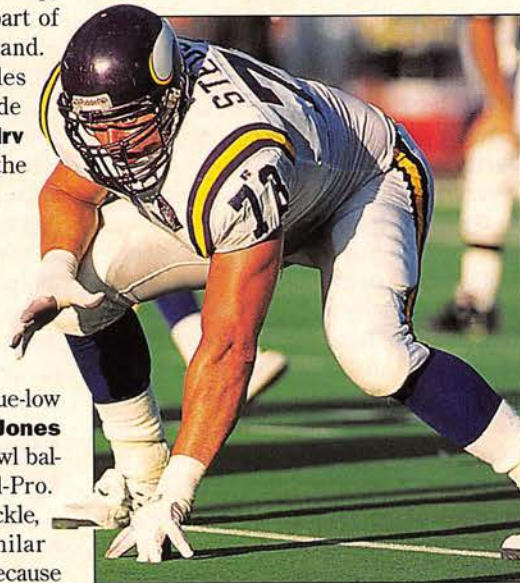
## Defensive Linemen

What's the difference between Bengals and bonds? Bonds mature.

That was the rap on two of Cincinnati's recent top draft selections: defensive end **John Copeland** in 1993 and defensive tackle **Dan Wilkinson** in '94. Last season Copeland had just one sack, one forced fumble, one pass defended, no fumble recoveries, and 41 tackles. Wilkinson had 5.5 sacks after a terrible start, but he reported to May minicamp 30 pounds overweight and couldn't finish the required 16 110-yard dashes. General manager Mike Brown noted, "I'd like him to give up his free membership at Wendy's."

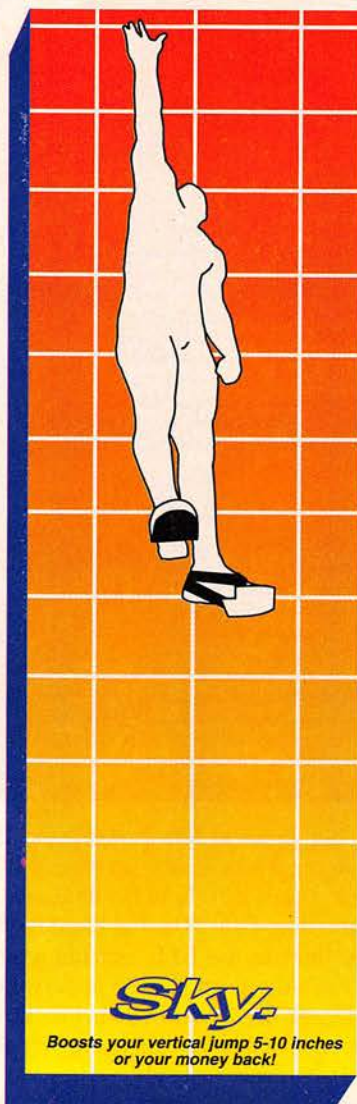
Jim Lippincott, who runs the Bengals'

**Steussie should anchor the Minnesota line well into the next millennium.**



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scouting department, says not to worry. "Wilkinson has lost some weight, changed his body composition quite a bit, toned up. Some of the quickness he had in college has come back to him. Copeland has come back better this year, too. He's a good pass-rusher and very stout against the run."

The Dolphins gambled on **Tim Bowens** in the first round in 1994, and he beat out Wilkinson and everyone else to be named defensive rookie of the year by The Associated Press. Miami personnel director Tom Heckert says Bowens will be even better this year because he "has awesome physical talent, a rare combination of size, quickness, and power, and has worked really hard to maximize his natural gifts."

The 49ers have the best pair of young defensive tackles in the league in **Dana Stubblefield** and **Bryant Young**. Ortmayer says Young "is ready to become dominant," ABC's Dan Dierdorf calls him "as good a rookie defensive tackle as the NFL has had in a long time," and the NFL players association named him NFC defensive rookie of the year for 1994.

Seattle's **Sam Adams**, Dallas' **Leon Lett**, Cleveland's **Dan Footman**, Chicago's **Carl Simpson**, and New Orleans' **Joe Johnson** could reach that level this season, and the Lions think '95 No. 1 draft choice **Luther Elliss** and '92 No. 1 **Robert Porcher** can, too. Four '95 No. 1 picks could be fine pass-rush-

ers: **Mike Mamula**, **Hugh Douglas**, **Warren Sapp**, and **Kevin Carter**.

## Linebackers

The Jets think **Marvin Jones** can be the league's next great middle linebacker if he ever stays healthy, but for the third time in three years, he's limping around. They know **Mo Lewis** is a great outside linebacker, but, hard as it is to believe that a New York athlete doesn't get enough credit, he hasn't.

"Mo Lewis could be the best outside linebacker in the league," Haley says. "He had four interceptions and six sacks even though we never rushed him. He had three sacks in the one game when they let him go. He's 6'3", 250, and runs a 4.6. Greg Lloyd is 226 pounds; here's a guy who can do the same things, and he's 250. This year the coaches are letting Lewis rush the passer more, and he'll get more attention."

Another fifth-year player, the Rams' **Roman Phifer**, finally will be turned loose, too. "In this defense he'll be free to make plays, and he's explosive enough and competitive enough to do it," Ortmayer says. Dungy says "this could be a Pro Bowl year" for fourth-year outside linebacker **Ed McDaniel** of the Vikings.

The Patriots have the league's best pair of young outside linebackers in **Willie McGinest** and **Chris Slade**, and the Steelers have the league's most underrated inside linebacker in **Chad Brown**. In his first full year as a starter, Brown not only led the league's best defense in tackles, but he collected 8.5 sacks—a huge total for an inside player. Woodson was so impressed he voted Brown the team's MVP, ahead of All-Pros Lloyd, Kevin Greene, and himself.

The Raiders tout outside linebacker **Rob Fredrickson**, a rookie starter last year, and middle linebacker **Greg Biekert**, who led the team in tackles in his second pro season. Fox says Fredrickson won't get many sacks because he's rarely asked to blitz but is as good in coverage as any linebacker in the league. "Biekert also had a hell of a year last year," Fox says, "but nobody knew it other than the coaches in the league."

Now you do, too.

## Defensive Backs

The Colts call **Ray Buchanan** "Big Play," with big reason. The 1993 third-round draft choice started the first 10 games of 1994 at free safety but

**Young is half of a 49ers tackle tandem that takes things into its own hands.**

## In the Year 2000...

This is what the NFL All-Pro team might look like at the turn of the century, based on the opinions of the NFL coaches and personnel experts we polled:

### OFFENSE

QB Drew Bledsoe, Troy Aikman  
HB Marshall Faulk, Ki-Jana Carter  
FB William Floyd, Natrone Means  
WR Herman Moore, Carl Pickens, J.J. Stokes  
WR Charles Johnson, Joey Galloway, Michael Westbrook  
LT Tony Boselli, Bob Whitfield  
LG Richmond Webb, Ruben Brown  
C Dermontti Dawson, Steve Everitt  
RG Steve Wisniewski, Aaron Taylor  
RT William Roaf, Erik Williams  
TE Ben Coates, Kyle Brady

### DEFENSE

LE Mike Mamula, Tony Bennett  
LT Chester McGlockton, Leon Lett  
RT Bryant Young, Dan Wilkinson, Dana Stubblefield  
RE Hugh Douglas, Kevin Carter  
LLB Willie McGinest, Trev Alberts  
MLB Junior Seau, Chad Brown, Bryan Cox  
RLB Mo Lewis, Simeon Rice (Illinois senior)  
LCB Ray Buchanan, Aeneas Williams, Aaron Glenn  
RCB Deion Sanders, Tyrone Poole, Dewayne Washington  
SS Darren Woodson, Henry Jones, Rodney Harrison  
FS Eric Turner, Rod Woodson, Merton Hanks

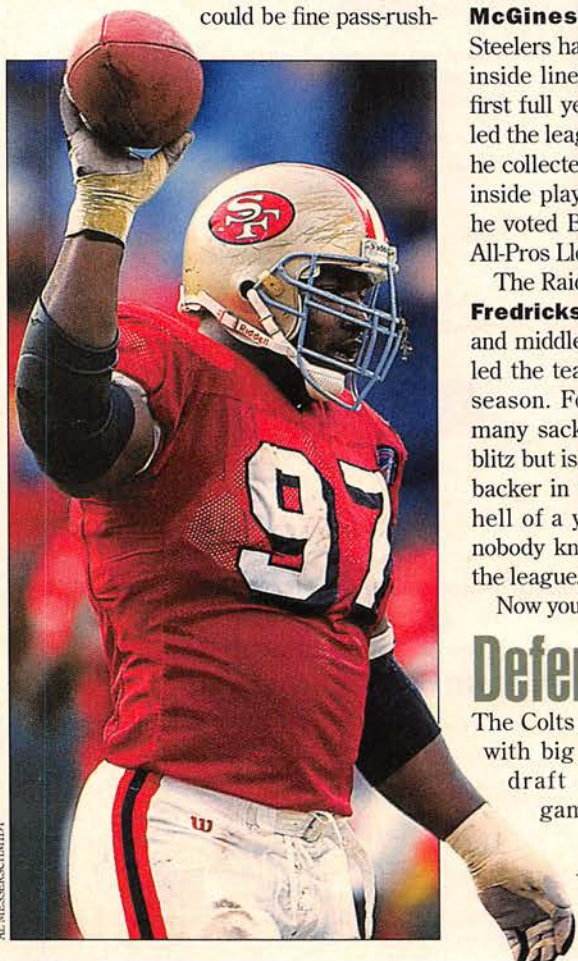
made his name at left cornerback. He had interceptions in a team-record five straight games and six of his final seven, returning three for TDs. His eight thefts ranked third in the NFL, and his return yards ranked second in team history. But the biggest theft came when Pro Bowl voters robbed him by choosing Kansas City's Dale Carter instead.

Miami's **Troy Vincent** wasn't at full throttle last season after coming back from major knee surgery. "Now that he's injury-free," Heckert says, "he should take his great ability to the next level. He's a future All-Pro."

The 1994 draft class produced four fine cornerbacks: Minnesota's **Dewayne Washington**, Cleveland's **Antonio Langham**, the Jets' **Aaron Glenn**, and the Giants' **Thomas Randolph**. And the Super Bowl debacle against the 49ers produced a new free safety for the Chargers. **Rodney Harrison** is a true sleeper, a junior who came out of Western Illinois early and was a fifth-round pick in 1994.

"He's a prototype free safety, a big-time hitter," Devaney says. "He has a nose for the ball; he'll make plays. He's going to have a couple of highlight hits every game." ■

In the August issue, STEVE HUBBARD answered 95 questions for the '95 season and wrote a compelling profile of Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Greg Lloyd.



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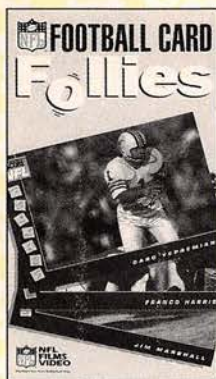
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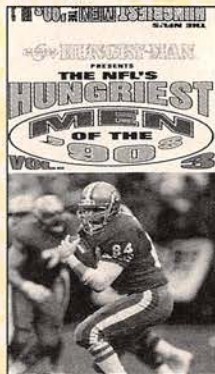
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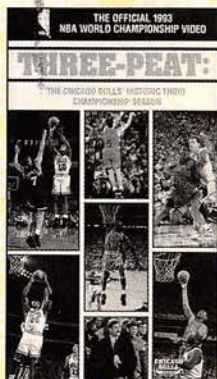
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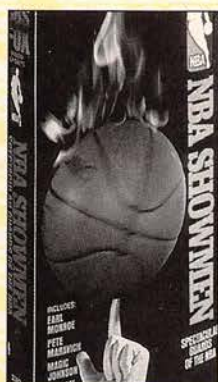
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The grimaces are coming more often  
for Smith and his generation of backs.





# Nasty

**E**MMITT SMITH, IN HIS SIXTH PROFESSIONAL SEASON, is running on borrowed time. Barry Sanders, in his seventh year, is unlikely ever to duplicate his sensational sixth. Thurman Thomas, in his eighth year as an NFL running back, clearly is looking over his shoulder.

In football, they say the legs are the first to go, and for a running back there isn't much else. Players at other positions can compensate for leg injuries—quarterbacks strap on knee braces, wide receivers become third-down specialists, offensive linemen simply limp and go on—but a running back is here today, gone tomorrow.

The No. 1 pick of the 1995 draft, the Cincinnati Bengals' Ki-Jana Carter, probably will miss the entire '95 season because of an exhibition-game knee injury. Bo Jackson, the last running back selected first in his draft class before Carter, played in 38 NFL games. The two No. 1-drafted backs before Jackson? George Rogers (1981) last-

# Brutish

ed seven seasons; Billy Sims (1980) played in 60 NFL games. Of the 28 team-leading rushers in 1994, 19 had five seasons or less of NFL experience; Herschel Walker and Marcus Allen were the only team leaders with 10 pro seasons behind them—and the only two older than 28.

Smith, Sanders, and Thomas already have defied the odds, leaving fans to wonder how much longer they can last. Smith hobbled through 1994, and though he is only 26, concerns about his football future have grown now that the Dallas Cowboys offensive line has lost All-Pro center Mark Stepnoski to Houston, and All-Pro tackle Erik Williams is coming back from a serious knee injury suffered in a 1994 automobile accident.

Smith's rushing average had been climbing steadily, from 3.9 yards per carry as a rookie in 1990 to 4.3, 4.6, and a phenomenal 5.3 in 1993. Last year it dropped to 4.0. A pulled hamstring on

# and Short

*The law of nature for NFL running backs is "no pain, no gain"—and the heartless poundings batter and soon break even the best*

By **DON PIERSON**

ALLEN KEE/JOE ROSATO SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY





PAUL JASSENSEN

**A potent rusher and receiver, Thomas faces double danger—evidenced in his declining stats.**

December 19 forced him to miss his first NFL game due to injury last Christmas Eve, and in the playoffs Smith wasn't the same workhorse the Cowboys had ridden to the previous two Super Bowls.

Dallas selected Alabama running back Sherman Williams with its first pick in the 1995 draft. "We obviously didn't bring him in here to beat out Emmitt," says Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. "We realized we needed some protection in case something were to happen to him."

Sanders' numbers declined for three years until his sensational 1994 season, in which he flirted with the 2,000-yard mark. His production dropped from 1,548 yards in 1991 to 1,352 yards in 1992 and 1,115 yards in an injury-shortened 1993, but everyone marveled at his 1994 rebound to 1,883 yards at an eye-popping clip of 5.7 yards per carry.

Nevertheless, it is unusual for even the great ones to have a career year as late as Sanders did. Walter Payton's best rushing season was his third, Eric Dickerson's his second, Tony Dorsett's and O.J. Simpson's their fifth. John Riggins had his two best seasons in his 12th and 13th years—but then, Riggins always broke the mold.

At 29, Thomas is the oldest of the cur-

rent terrific trio, and he shows the most telling signs of wear. A better receiver than either Sanders or Smith, Thomas set an NFL record in 1992 by leading the league in all-purpose yardage for the fourth consecutive year, but in 1993 and 1994 his productivity fell: Thomas averaged less than 4.2 yards a carry for the first time in his career, dropping to 3.7 in 1993 and 3.8 in 1994, and his average per catch dipped below 10 yards for the first time, to 8.1 in '93 and 7.0 last season.

**T**he league's Big Three backs all are elusive—Sanders most of all—but even that doesn't guarantee longevity. The devastating hit can come at any time. "The unique property those guys have is the ability to make you miss, the ability not to always take the hit," says Carolina Panthers general manager Bill Polian. "But the greatest [at that] who ever played was Gale Sayers, and he only lasted a short time. So the risk is great." Sayers' phenomenal career was over after only 68 games and 4,956 yards.

When Polian was the general manager in

Buffalo he drafted Thomas, who had dropped to the second round due to concerns about a college knee injury. Nevertheless, Polian decided not to use the first pick in this year's draft on Carter. Though the Penn State product clearly was the best player coming out of college, Polian contends that even a potentially great running back is not the right pick for an expansion team.

"Once we're ready to win, the career of a running back is at an end or approaching it," Polian says. "I look at it from a four-year standpoint—the actuarial tables tell you that after that, running backs' careers are either over or begin to decline. They tend to contribute early, and they tend to be gambles

because one injury can end their career.

"As we factor that into drafting a running back high, plus the exorbitant prices paid for the top players, you better have contributions immediately—and he better contribute to *winning* immediately. Otherwise you've wasted your money. You're talking about paying mind-boggling amounts to a guy whose career could end instantly. Would the money we'd have had to pay Ki-Jana Carter as the first player have materially contributed to winning right off the bat? I don't think so."

Credit Polian with prescience. The Panthers traded the top pick to the Bengals, who took Carter and eventually signed him to a \$19.2 million deal, including a \$7.1 million signing bonus. The fear of a short career was in the minds of those in the Carter camp, too. Says agent Leigh Steinberg, who helped negotiate the deal: "With Ki-Jana, part of the argument [for the large bonus] is unless they get him help on the offensive line, that might be the only contract he ever sees."

Carolina dropped to the Bengals' spot at No. 5 and selected Carter's Penn State teammate, quarterback Kerry Collins. He cost a fortune, too—\$14.7 million for seven years, including a \$7 million bonus—and he won't be taking the Panthers to the Super Bowl anytime soon. But quarterbacks tend to blossom later than runners, and to last longer. The Panthers' plan sees

## Life After 30

**NFL RUNNING BACKS HAVE ACHIEVED 1,000-yard rushing seasons on 270 occasions. However, only 17 times has the feat been accomplished by a back 30 years of age or older. These are the backs (age is as of beginning of the 1,000-yard season):**

Player, Team	Season	Yards	Age
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John Riggins, Redskins	1983	1,347	34
John Henry Johnson, Steelers	1964	1,048	34
Franco Harris, Steelers	1983	1,007	33
Walter Payton, Bears	1986	1,333	32
John Henry Johnson, Steelers	1962	1,141	32
Ottis Anderson, Giants	1989	1,023	32
Walter Payton, Bears	1985	1,551	31
Tony Dorsett, Cowboys	1985	1,307	31
James Brooks, Bengals	1990	1,004	31
Walter Payton, Bears	1984	1,684	30
James Brooks, Bengals	1989	1,239	30
Tony Dorsett, Cowboys	1984	1,189	30
John Riggins, Redskins	1979	1,153	30
Herschel Walker, Eagles	1992	1,070	30
Rocky Bleier, Steelers	1976	1,036	30
Christian Okoye, Chiefs	1991	1,031	30



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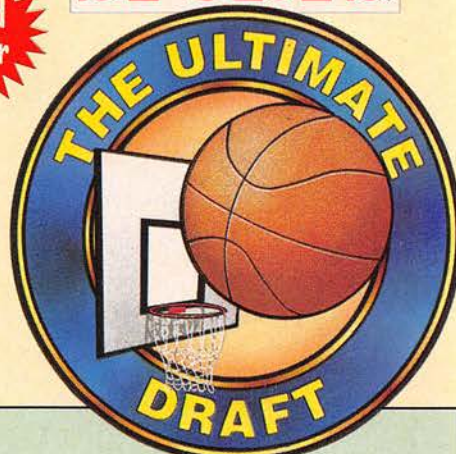
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**Congratulations to Scott Switalla of Los Angeles, CA., last year's \$15,000 grand prize winner!**

Select ONE (1) player from each group below.

**NOTE:** Points (PTS) are based on 1994/95 statistics using the Ultimate Draft scoring system. Due to publishing deadlines, team designations may not reflect recent changes.

GROUP 01	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 02	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 03	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 04	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 05	TEAM	GP	PTS.
1	C. Barkley	PHO	68 2748	1	V. Baker	MIL	82 2795	1	D. Barros	PHI	82 2732	1	C. Ceballos	LAK	58 1909	1	C. Laettner	MIN	81 2357
2	P. Ewing	NY	79 3192	2	D. Coleman	NJ	56 2053	2	C. Drexler	HOU	76 2676	2	V. Divac	LAK	80 2718	2	D. Manning	PHO	46 1350
3	M. Jordan	CHI	17 707	3	G. Hill	DET	70 2378	3	A. Hardaway	ORL	77 2656	3	L. Johnson	CHA	81 2585	3	D. Rodja	BOS	66 1963
4	K. Malone	UTA	82 3557	4	S. Kemp	SEA	82 2796	4	T. Hardaway	GS	62 2115	4	C. Mullin	GS	25 773	4	C. Robinson	POR	75 2383
5	S. O'Neal	ORL	79 3695	5	J. Mashburn	DAL	80 2645	5	J. Jackson	DAL	51 1800	5	D. Mutombo	DEN	82 2449	5	J. Smith	GS	- Rookie -
6	H. Olatunji	HOU	72 3410	6	A. Mourning	CHA	77 2789	6	G. Payton	SEA	82 2770	6	G. Rice	MIA	82 2527	6	R. Smits	IND	78 2231
7	D. Robinson	SA	81 3747	7	S. Pippen	CHI	79 3061	7	J. Stockton	UTA	82 2684	7	D. Schrempf	SEA	82 2518	7	C. Weatherston	PHI	76 2296
8	C. Webber	WAS	54 2027	8	G. Robinson	MIL	80 2602	8	R. Strickland	POR	64 2222	8	L. Vaught	LAC	80 2445	8	K. Willis	MIA	67 2068
GROUP 06	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 07	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 08	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 09	TEAM	GP	PTS.	GROUP 10	TEAM	GP	PTS.
1	K. Anderson	NJ	72 2314	1	H. Grant	ORL	74 2000	1	S. Bradley	PHI	82 1818	1	N. Anderson	ORL	76 1996	1	S. Augmon	ATL	76 1765
2	M. Blaylock	ATL	80 2608	2	T. Gugliotta	MIN	77 2021	2	S. Elliott	SA	81 2075	2	J. Dumars	DET	67 1819	2	T. Bogues	CHA	78 1897
3	J. Kidd	DAL	79 2134	3	T. Hill	CLE	70 1879	3	A. Gilliam	NJ	82 2080	3	J. Horacek	UTA	81 2040	3	D. Brown	BOS	79 1945
4	R. Miller	IND	81 2154	4	J. Howard	WAS	65 1881	4	B. Grant	SAC	80 1920	4	K. Johnson	PHO	47 1270	4	S. Douglas	BOS	65 1652
5	M. Richmond	SAC	82 2655	5	T. Kukoc	CHI	81 2201	5	D. McKey	IND	81 1919	5	D. Majerle	PHO	82 2130	5	H. Hawkins	SEA	82 1888
6	L. Spirewell	GS	69 2113	6	T. Mills	DET	72 1937	6	C. Oakley	NY	50 1144	6	M. Price	CLE	48 1243	6	E. Murdock	MIL	75 1798
7	J. Stackhouse	PHI	- Rookie -	7	B. Owens	MIA	70 1860	7	D. Wilkins	BOS	77 2012	7	I. Rider	MIN	75 2118	7	P. Richardson	LAC	80 1908
8	N. Van Exel	LAK	80 2334	8	W. Williams	SAC	77 2106	8	J. Williams	CLE	74 1812	8	J. Starks	NY	80 1949	8	S. Smith	ATL	80 1950

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## Current NFL Running Backs, Age 30 or Older

Player, Team	Age	Skinny
Marcus Allen, Chiefs	35	Last rushed for 1,000 yards in '85
Herschel Walker, Giants	33	Primarily a third-down back in recent years
Earnest Byner, Browns	32	A backup the past few seasons
Keith Byars, Dolphins	31	Used more as a receiver and blocker than as a runner
Ronnie Harmon, Chargers	31	Third-down back
Steve Smith, Seahawks	31	Career high in attempts was 117 in '89
Rod Bernstine, Broncos	30	First 200-carry season came in seventh NFL campaign in '93
Bobby Joe Edmonds, Bucs	30	Did not play in the NFL last season
Marc Logan, Redskins	30	Career backup
Brad Muster	30	Cut by Saints in July because of injury
John L. Williams, Steelers	30	Known best for his receiving and blocking

## Current NFL Running Backs, Age 29

Player, Team	Skinny
Steve Avery, Steelers	Journeyman with two career NFL carries entering '95
Eric Ball, Raiders	Career backup
Marion Butts	Slipped to 2.9-yard average in '94 in New England; was cut by 49ers this year
Mark Higgs, Cardinals	Workload has diminished the past few seasons
Daryl Johnston, Cowboys	Primarily a blocker and receiver
Dave Meggett, Patriots	Third-down back
Thurman Thomas, Bills	Six straight 1,000-yard seasons, but rushing and receiving averages are down
Lewis Tillman, Bears	A backup until last season
Lorenzo White, Browns	Has had only one 200-carry season in eight-year NFL career
Todd McNair, Oilers	Career high in attempts was 51 in '93

## Running Backs Who Turn 29 During the '95 Season

Player, Team	Skinny
Kimble Anders, Chiefs	Saw very little action until third NFL season in '93
Carwell Gardner, Bills	Career backup
Craig Heyward, Falcons	Has averaged fewer than 100 carries a season over seven-year career
Tracy Johnson, Seahawks	Entered 1995 season with 59 career rushing attempts in six NFL seasons

*Ages are as of beginning of the 1995 season.*

Collins reaching his prime about the time the team is ready to contend.

The relative paucity of productive quarterbacks also influenced the decision. "Running backs are not in short supply," Polian says. "Compared to quarterbacks, they're relatively easy to find."

Carolina thought it was getting its man when it plucked Barry Foster off the running back scrap heap. The Steelers had decided that at \$2.26 million, Foster's 851 yards in 1994 weren't enough bang for the buck; Bam Morris was younger and cheaper. Carolina jumped at the chance to get Foster, who just three seasons ago rushed for an AFC-leading 1,690 yards, but Foster was so hobbled in training camp that he was cut by the expansion club—thrown back on the scrap heap at the age of 26.

**M**oney is driving much of the backfield shuffling. Given the short career of the average running back and a salary-cap system that

leaves less margin than ever for risk, teams are much more willing to part with a back, even if he's young and a star. Ask Foster, Terry Allen, and Ricky Watters—all of whom, after five years or less in the NFL, found themselves unwanted, unneeded, or too expensive for the teams they led in rushing in 1994.

This season nearly half the clubs in the league—including not just the expansion teams in Carolina and Jacksonville, but the Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers—are featuring new No. 1 backs. The Steelers are going with Morris. The Minnesota Vikings cut Allen; he signed with the Washington Redskins. Lorenzo White went from the Houston Oilers to the Cleveland Browns, Ron Moore from the Arizona Cardinals to the New York Jets, Herschel Walker from the

Philadelphia Eagles to the New York Giants. Watters earned a Super Bowl championship ring with the 49ers, then signed as a free agent with the Eagles. When was the last time a Super Bowl winner allowed its leading rusher to escape at the peak of his career?

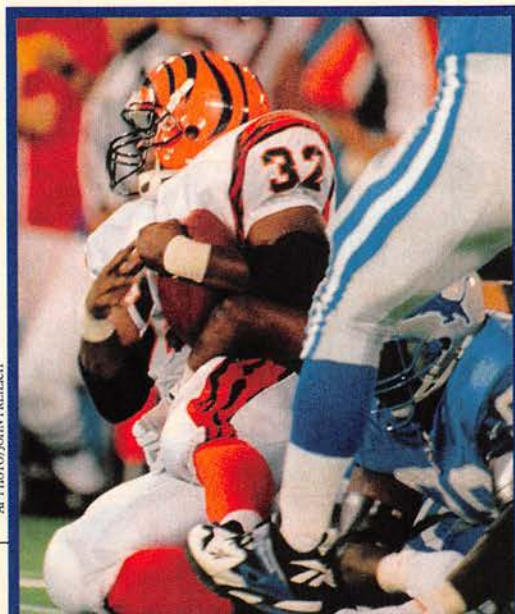
Such turnover caused NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue, during a speech in Chicago, to turn toward the league's all-time leading rusher and muse: "One of our concerns about the new system is whether we will continue to have heroes like Walter Payton, who was with the Bears when they weren't very good and stayed there until times got better." Of course, the absence of true free agency helped keep Payton in Chicago for his entire 13-year career, but Tagliabue's concern is valid: The football heroes of tomorrow are less likely than ever to be running backs, because running backs aren't hanging around long enough for fans to learn their names.

**T**he Vikings were scheduled to pay Terry Allen \$1.3 million in 1995 but instead opted to go with younger Robert Smith. The Redskins, desperate to improve their 24th-ranked rushing offense, signed Allen for \$450,000. "Under the salary-cap system, teams define players as either irreplaceable or replaceable," Steinberg says. "Irreplaceable players have received unprecedented contract numbers—but the flip side is that once that player goes from a superstar to merely a star, that contract is vulnerable, and a player runs a much higher risk than before of getting cut."

"The whole definition of replaceability is not entirely a football judgment. It has a financial component to it."

However, Doug Allen, assistant executive director of the NFL players associa-

**Wasted youth: After three carries in his first exhibition game, Carter was lost for 1995.**





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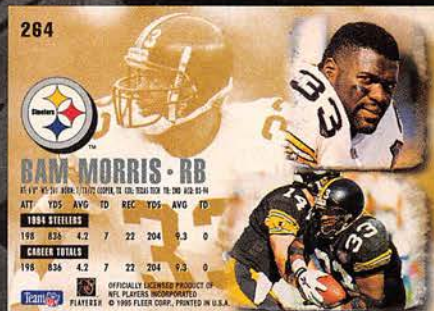


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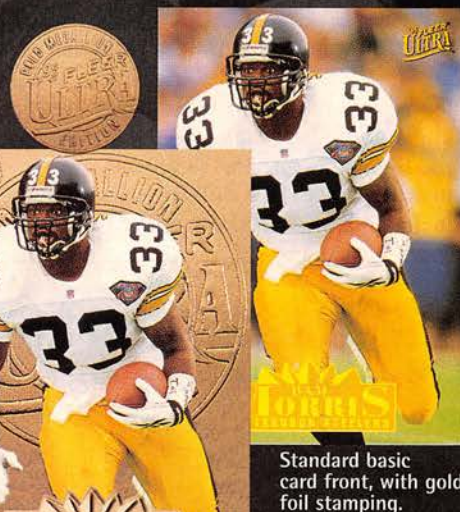
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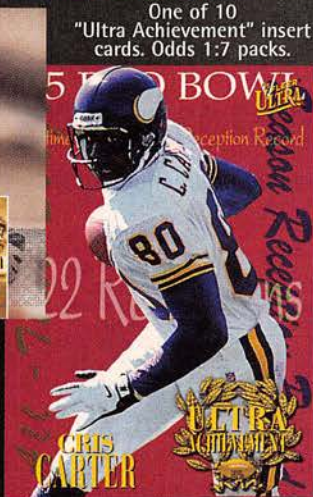


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PAUL JANSSEN

### Conditioning, commitment, and sheer luck preserved Payton for 13 seasons.

tion, points out that not all running backs are getting short-changed—evidenced by the Giants signing the 33-year-old Walker to a three-year, \$4.8 million contract that included a club-record signing bonus of

\$1.8 million. "It's a question of what each club is looking for," Allen says. "Some teams weren't willing to pay Herschel that much. One was. I don't think the cap is driving running backs out of football."

According to Allen, it's nothing new for backs to encounter tough going. "Two things catch everybody eventually," he says. "You slow down too much, and you can't recover from injuries. When you're 24 you could recover in three weeks, but if the same injury takes you three months, then no matter how good you are when you recover, the team can't use you. The falloff in production is faster at the end of the career for that position than it is for some others."

**S**ince running backs are temporary by nature, hiring them on a short-term basis simply makes sense to most GMs. "If you can't get one in a particular year," Polian says, "you may be like the Bears and have running back by committee one year—and then along comes Rashaan Salaam."

Chicago ranked 15th in the league in rushing last season primarily using Lewis Tillman, a free-agent second-stringer from the Giants, and Raymont Harris, a fourth-round rookie. Salaam, the 1994 Heisman Trophy winner, was drafted in the expectation that he'd carry the load this year.

The real groundbreakers in the rent-a-back philosophy have been the Raiders and New Orleans Saints; each has had a different rushing leader every season in the 1990s. The Raiders shucked their tradition

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### Basketball

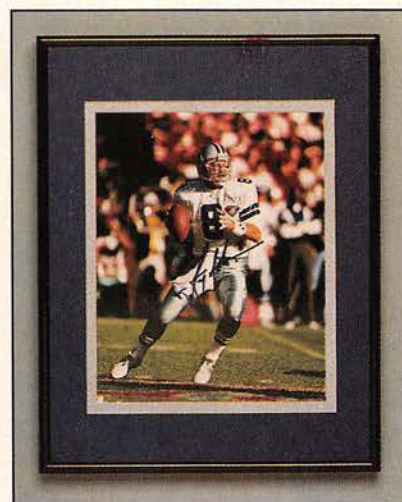
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of long-term backfield workhorses—Clem Daniels in the '60s, Marv Hubbard and Mark Van Eeghen in the '70s, and Marcus Allen in the '80s—and from 1990 to 1994 passed the baton from Bo Jackson to Roger Craig to Eric Dickerson to Greg Robinson to Harvey Williams. All but Jackson and Robinson, a rookie in 1993, were castoffs from other teams. New Orleans has bounced from Dalton Hilliard to Craig Heyward to Fred McAfee to Vaughn Dunbar to Derek Brown to Mario Bates in the '90s. The last four were rookies when they led the Saints in rushing.

Other teams also are playing musical backs. The Kansas City Chiefs went from Christian Okoye to Barry Word to the seemingly ageless Allen. The New England Patriots have switched from Jon Vaughn to Leonard Russell to Marion Butts to whomever coach Bill Parcells happens to like at the moment.

Indianapolis Colts director of football operations Bill Tobin, who drafted Payton for the Bears, hopes for a little more continuity at the position after taking Marshall Faulk with the second pick of the 1994 draft. "I'm well aware that running back careers are shorter than other positions," Tobin says. "They usually don't stay healthy, and they don't want to take the pounding they used to take. If you get

seven to 10 years, you're pretty fortunate."

Notes Steinberg: "There's a maxim that every running back has a finite number of hits allotted to him. Part of the reason Smith and Sanders and Thomas might have longer careers is they are built differently than the stars of before. They don't take the type of hits that Earl Campbell took. And if you go back 10 to 15 years, the top backs were bigger, taller players like George Rogers and Eric Dickerson."

Bears coach Dave Wannstedt pays no attention to how long he might have Salaam, who at 20 is the youngest player in the NFL. "I don't look at running backs any different from any other position," Wannstedt says. "We want Rashaan Salaam or Raymont Harris to rush for as many yards as it takes us to get to the Super Bowl right now. We're not going to save anything for next year."

**T**he greats have no problem with this philosophy, an attitude that sometimes overwhelms common sense. "One thing about the Emmitt Smiths is their great competitiveness," Wannstedt says. "They want to be in the Hall of Fame. They want to be in the Pro Bowl. They want to be in the Super Bowl. From a coaching standpoint, it's easier said than done to try and not run those guys too

much and use them up. They never want to come out of a game."

Even if the runners wanted rest, the coaches probably couldn't afford to give it to them. Says Wannstedt, "The league is so darned competitive there aren't many games when you can take a guy out in the fourth quarter."

Smith says he thinks about Payton's record "all the time." The astonishing thing about the mark is that even though Smith is running neck-and-neck with Payton after five seasons, and Sanders is ahead of where Payton was after six, Smith isn't even halfway to Payton's total, and Sanders just reached the halfway point at the end of last season. After 77 games Smith had rushed 1,630 times for 7,183 yards, Payton 1,625 times for 7,273 yards. After 89 games Sanders had rushed 1,763 times for 8,672 yards, Payton 1,865 times for 8,386 yards.

Smith and Sanders already have had Hall of Fame-quality careers. They'll have to practically duplicate them before we begin a countdown. As great as those two are, given the realities running backs face these days, chances are Payton is safe for another generation—and perhaps much, much longer. ■

DON PIERSON has been covering pro football from his Chicago base for 26 years.

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# If It's September, This Must Be New York

Today even baseball's stars are journeymen, picked up for a pennant stretch, only to leave when the job is done **By JOHN FEINSTEIN**

ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 31, A small Shea Stadium crowd watched the New York Mets and the Pittsburgh Pirates play one more game in what many weeks earlier had become a meaningless march to October for both teams. Among the millions of New Yorkers not watching the game was Joe McIlvaine, the general manager of the Mets. He was in his office burning up the phone lines. His mission was simple: get rid of his best pitcher.

Shortly before 11:00 p.m., with a little more than an hour remaining before baseball's trading deadline, McIlvaine made the best deal he could: He traded two-time Cy Young Award winner Bret Saberhagen, still only 31 years old, to the Colorado Rockies for a 25-year-old pitcher McIlvaine had never seen pitch and an 18-year-old just out of high school.

There is nothing new about the late-season star-for-prospect swap. When the New York Yankees were the game's dominant team, they always seemed to pick up a key player down the stretch, whether it was Johnny Mize in 1951 or Pete Ramos in 1964. But this is 1995, and this is baseball's new era: no commissioner, no collective bargaining agreement, no notion of what the future may hold for the game, and almost no limit on the number of teams contending for a wild-card spot in the expanded playoffs. In this world, hired guns have become as commonplace as empty seats.

During the frenzied days leading to the trading deadline, some of the game's biggest names changed uniforms: Saberhagen, David Cone, Andy Benes, David Wells, Scott

Erickson, Kevin Tapani, Mark Portugal, Ken Hill, Bobby Bonilla. Each of these trades involved a non-contender giving up a big salary to a contender in exchange for low-salaried prospects. Almost all the veteran players traded will be free agents after either this season or next.

In some cases—the Saberhagen deal, for example—the prospects may end up being suspects, but that didn't stop the deals from going through. On one end, a club saved money; on the other, a team took a short-term gamble.

As they're packed up and moved along, the hired guns tend to spew the same cliché about how great it is to go from a team with no hope to a contender. But that isn't always how they *feel*. As the players who just moments earlier had been his teammates made their way out of the clubhouse to catch a plane to Cincinnati, Saberhagen was asked the cliché question: "Bret, is it exciting to be traded from last place to first?"

He began to respond in the way that would give everyone the quick, pat, dead-

## Toronto Blue Jays

Acquired: 4/6/95.

From: Royals. Via: Trade.

Team result: 35-47.

## Kansas City Royals

Acquired: 12/8/92. From: Blue Jays. Via: Free Agency.

Team result: 148-129.

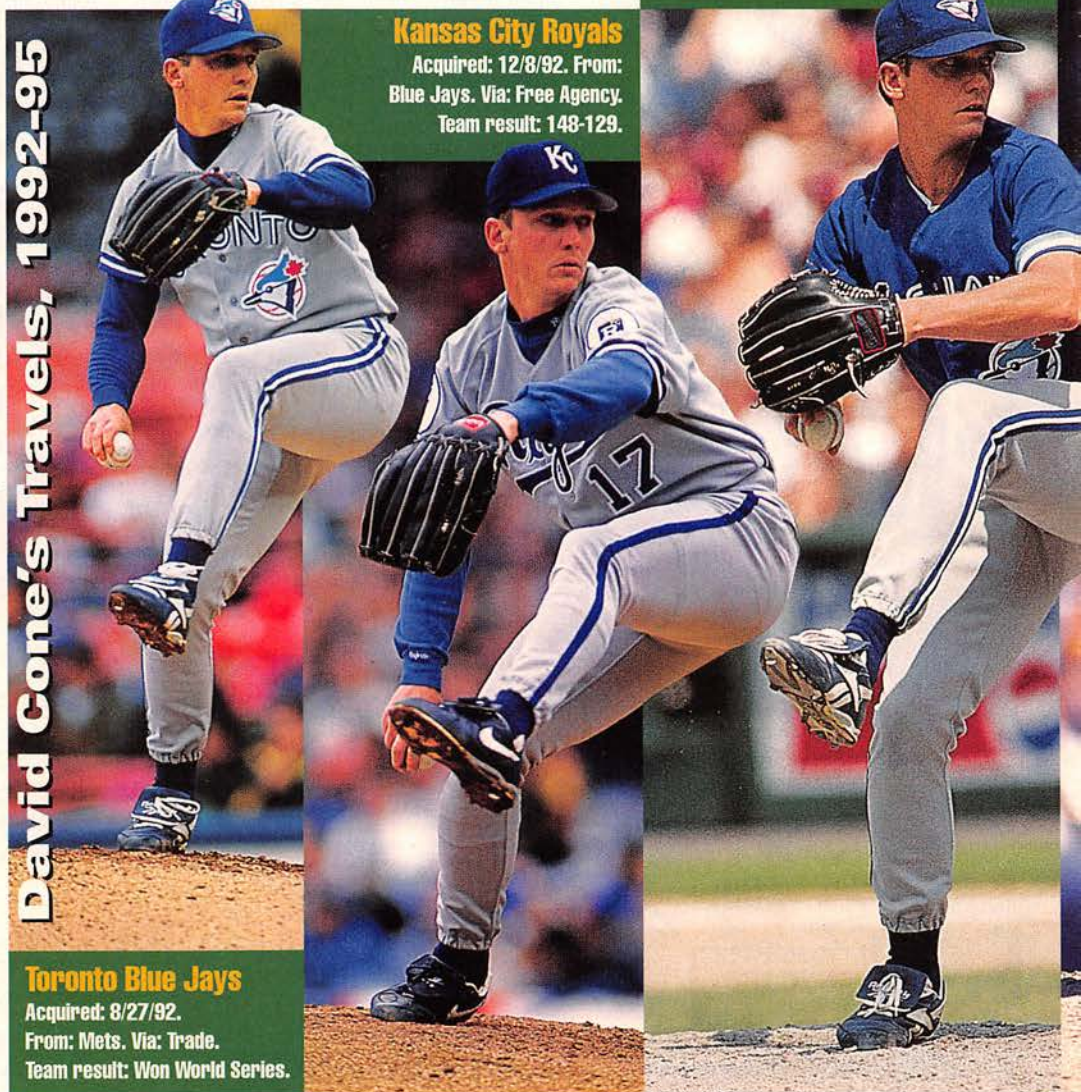
## David Cone's Travels, 1992-95

## Toronto Blue Jays

Acquired: 8/27/92.

From: Mets. Via: Trade.

Team result: Won World Series.





line-friendly answer they needed. Then he paused. "You know, I hope I go out there and the Rockies win the World Series," he said. "That's why they traded for me and what they're going to pay me for."

"But I was on the Kansas City team that won the World Series in 1985. I remember what that felt like. I was with that team from the first day of spring training until the seventh game of the World Series. There's nothing like that feeling—to go through all that time and all that work and have it pay off like that, and get to enjoy it with the guys you went through it with."

"I'm being brought to Colorado for eight weeks. I don't know many of the guys out there, and they don't know me. It won't be the same feeling; it can't be. I have a job to

do. It's a different kind of job than the one I had to do a few hours ago, but that's what it is: a job."

It's almost naive to think that anyone in baseball looks at his job these days as anything more than just that. Players are in the game to make all they can while they can, and who can blame them? But it isn't nearly as simple as that. Ask Saberhagen. Or ask the man who has become the epitome of the hired gun in the '90s, David Cone.

On July 28 Cone was traded from the Toronto Blue Jays to the Yankees, the fourth time he had changed teams in less than three years. Twenty years ago, perhaps even five, it would have been unheard of for a pitcher of Cone's skills to change teams so often in such a brief period. Now it's not only part of baseball—it's a staple of the way the game is run. And even if Cone loves New York and the idea of pitching for the Yankees, he might well be with yet another team before next season begins.

"I'd like to stay here for a long time," Cone says. "I've always liked New York and always felt I could handle the pressures of playing here. But for now, all I can do is pitch as well as I can and then see what's out there during the offseason. Nothing is certain in this game anymore."

No one has learned that firsthand more often than Cone. The first time he was traded—from the Kansas City Royals to the Mets in '87—was a surprise to him. He was only 24 at the time, and he figured he was going to be the hometown kid who made good in Kansas City. Instead, he became a baby-faced killer who went 20-3 for the Mets in 1988. Even when New York was stunned by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the '88 playoffs, Cone's future was apparent: He would pitch the Mets into the postseason for years to come. But the team fizzled, and in August 1992 Cone found himself traded from a non-contender to a contender. He flew to New York on a red-eye from San Francisco as a Met and awoke to find out he was a Blue Jay.

"The whole thing was a shock," Cone says. "All of a sudden you're pulled away from everything that's familiar and dumped into something brand-new where you don't know anyone or anything."

Cone went from his comfortable Manhattan apartment to a room in the hotel at SkyDome with a view not of the playing field, but of railroad tracks. "I sat there that first night thinking, 'How did my life go off the tracks? How can I suddenly be so alone?' It sounds corny, but that's how I felt. Very lonely."

He put aside his feelings and did what he was being paid to do: help turn the Blue Jays into world champions. Cone was superb down the stretch in '92, won the second game of the playoffs after Jack Morris had lost Game 1, and pitched well in the World Series. The Blue Jays won, Cone drank champagne—and then packed his bags. Job done. Time to ride off.

He went back to Kansas City, in part because of a three-year, \$18 million deal that included \$9 million up front, but also because Royals owner Ewing Kauffman convinced him to come home. Cone won the Cy Young Award in strike-ravaged '94, but when the courts finally brought the players back in the spring of '95, Kauffman was dead. His successors didn't see a hometown kid; they saw a huge salary on a team that wasn't going to win anytime soon. Poof—Cone was gone, back to Toronto.

This time he understood—just as he understood when the Jays did a nosedive and he started hearing he was going to be moved once more. When the word came that it was the Yankees, Cone was excited because he'd be back in New York in a pennant race, and because he is thoughtful enough to recognize irony when he sees it.

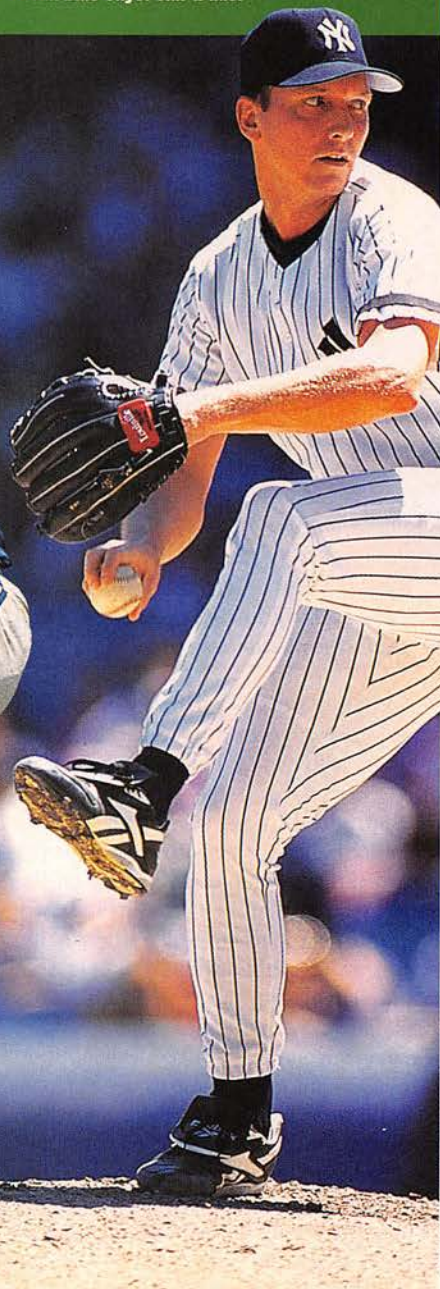
"I got traded out of New York once; now I've come back on the other side of town," he says. "It couldn't have happened this way a few years ago." For a journeyman, yes; for a star, no—except nowadays, the stars are journeymen.

Fans complain—rightly—that free agency has made it almost impossible to develop a relationship with a team because the names and faces change so frequently. The blame tends to fall on the shoulders of the players for hopscotching when their contracts expire, but free agency works both ways. Often, the team decides it doesn't want the player back—and, as 1995 proves, the team may pull the trigger on a deal before the season is over. One day, Bret Saberhagen is the ace of the Mets; the next day he's in Colorado, and someone named Juan Acevedo is reporting to Norfolk, Va., home of the Mets' Triple-A team, while a general manager who has never seen him pitch tells fans how lucky his team was to pull off this deal.

Hired guns, by their nature, don't stick around town very long after they've served their purpose. That doesn't mean they always want to leave. These days, as often as not, the choice isn't theirs.

"If the Yankees want me here, I'll be here," Cone says. In August and September of 1995, they wanted him. But when the job he was brought in to do is done, who knows? He's a short-term investment. In baseball, long-term doesn't seem to exist anymore. ■

**New York Yankees** Acquired: 7/28/95.  
From: Blue Jays. Via: Trade.



CHUCK RITLENSE; FOCUS ON SPORTS; ROB SKECH/ALB PHOTOS; MICHAEL PIZZINI



# BEHIND THE WHEEL

By LEWIS FRANCK

## A Tug of War for the Wheel

THERE'S A CRAZY VIRUS GOING around pro sports, infecting otherwise healthy games. It causes disruption between the people who run sports and those who compete in them—but the ones who get sick are the fans.

The virus hit baseball, then hockey. Basketball has been touched by it. Now Indy car racing, which has enjoyed unprecedented success in recent years, has the bug. At the height of its popularity, the sport is in danger of being ripped in two.

Control, not money, is the heart of the issue here. And unlike the clashes in baseball, hockey, and basketball, the competitors and the team owners are on the same side, pitted against the man who runs the most important "ballpark": Indianapolis Motor Speedway president Tony George.

Last year George announced the formation of the Indy Racing League, which, beginning in 1996, will operate in direct competition with IndyCar, which is operated by Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART), the sport's primary governing body. George says the IRL is designed to return Indy car racing to its roots—a full season of races on oval tracks involving mostly American drivers. He also hopes the new series will reduce the high costs involved in running Indy cars.

The foundation for the clash was laid during the last civil war in Indy car racing. Sixteen years ago, team owners broke from the United States Auto Club, which ran the sport from its base in Indianapolis, to form CART. Led by owners such as Roger Penske, the organization soon changed the face of Indy car racing by taking the series to road courses as well as ovals and drawing drivers and sponsors from around the world. Now called simply IndyCar, the owners group sanctions all but one race in the PPG Indy Car World Series.

The one race the owners *don't* control is the crown jewel: the Indianapolis 500. George now is playing that trump card in a high-stakes game for control of the sport.

Since shortly after World War II, the qualifying process for the Indy 500 has been that the fastest 33 drivers in the May

time trials have made the race. Indeed, qualifying for Indy itself has become a month-long event that draws huge crowds.

The IRL has issued a set of rules that would end that longstanding Indy tradition. In order to ensure full fields at the four other races the IRL has scheduled for 1996, 25 spots in the Indy 500's field of 33 have been reserved for IRL drivers. That leaves just eight places for teams not competing on George's circuit. If you have the ninth-fastest car at the Indy time trials in 1996 but the eight in front of you aren't in the IRL, you're out. For drivers, that means you

has to die.' It's not warranted to satisfy somebody's ego. Somebody wants to gain control."

After a flurry of rhetoric and fruitless negotiations, the principals in the two series basically have left the bargaining table with the attitude, "You do your series, and we'll do ours." But the problem remains. The top drivers—Rahal, Al Unser Jr., Michael Andretti, Emerson Fittipaldi—are committed to run the IndyCar series. Thus racing fans face the real prospect of seeing the best drivers on the IndyCar circuit being left out of the biggest race in the



**Replacement racing? Don't look for many stars at Indy in '96 if George [left] succeeds in his power struggle with Penske and other team owners.**

either join the IRL or risk not running in the Indy 500—the race your sponsors care most about.

The move shocked the IndyCar side. "I don't think anybody seriously thought they would change the entire qualifying structure of the Indianapolis 500," says 1986 Indy 500 winner Bobby Rahal, now an IndyCar owner-driver.

Overall, reaction from the IndyCar camp toward the new series has been predictable and sharp. "All these years we've strived to bring the series to a level it deserves, to the level of the premier sports in the world," says Mario Andretti, who though retired remains a leading spokesman for the drivers. "We're not competing with other series—we're competing with other sports. I've told Tony, 'I don't care how you put it—there's not room for two series. One

world. The IRL has no stars in its fold except the team owned by retired four-time Indy 500 winner A.J. Foyt, who has sided with George out of loyalty.

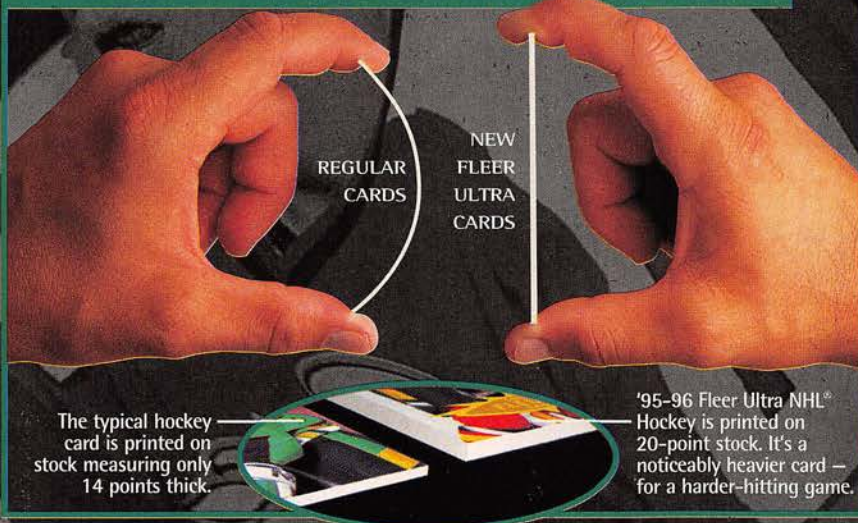
Where do the fans stand? On various computer bulletin boards the feeling is primarily anti-IRL, and at racetracks on the IndyCar circuit, anti-IRL T-shirts show a line drawn through an oval (rather than a circle). In the tabloid trade papers that cater to small-town racers and fans across the nation, the sentiment is anti-IndyCar.

Hasn't anyone learned the lessons from baseball? Fans don't want to see replacement players. They don't care about which acronym sanctions what race, or about those behind-the-scenes power grabs. They just want a good show. Given the current dispute, they may not see one at Indy car tracks next year. ■



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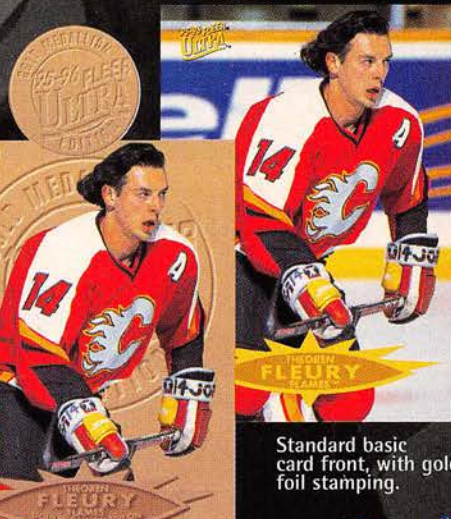
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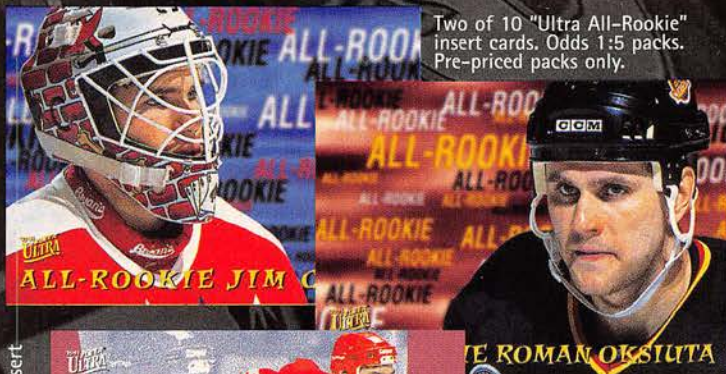
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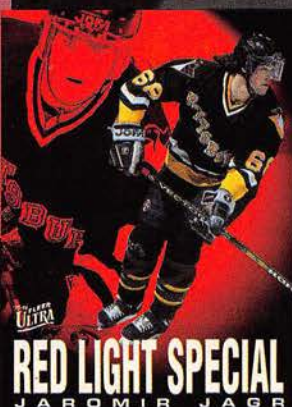
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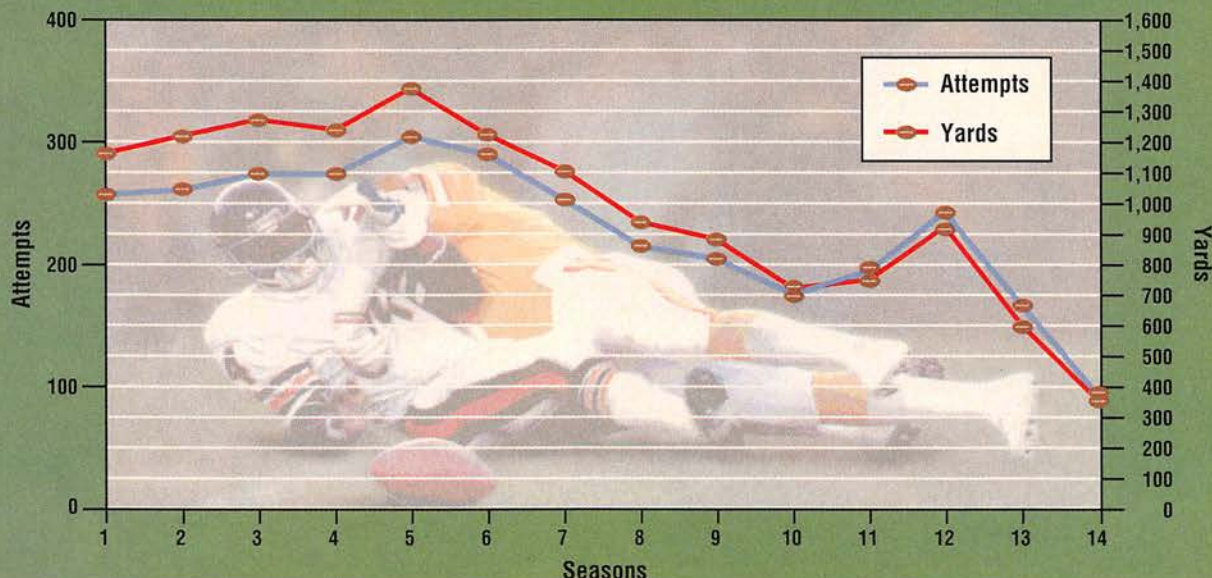
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# NUMBERS

## DECLINE OF THE BEST

The graph below charts the combined average totals in rushing attempts and yardage, season by season, for the nine backs in NFL history with more than 10,000 rushing yards, plus Herschel Walker, who is in the 10,000-yard club with his combined NFL and USFL numbers. The 10 running backs are: Walter Payton (13 seasons), Walker (12), Tony Dorsett (12), Eric Dickerson (11), Franco Harris (13), Jim Brown (9), John Riggins (14), O.J. Simpson (11), Marcus Allen (13), and Otis Anderson (14). The combined averages for these 10 greats show that even the best backs suffer a gradual decline after their fifth pro season. *Note: Stats for strike seasons 1982 and 1987 were projected for a 16-game schedule.*



## THE CLASS OF ALL CLASSES?

The 1983 NFL draft usually is considered the best ever for quarterbacks, and it's hard to argue with the talent that came out of college that year, including likely Hall-of-Famers Dan Marino, John Elway, and Jim Kelly. However, a look back reveals that 1971 produced another bounty of quarterbacks who, although a bit less productive in terms of passing stats, surpass their '83 counterparts in the most important column: Super Bowl victories. Check out the career numbers for these NFL passers (stats through 1994 season):

### Quarterback Class of 1971

Name	Atts.	Comp.	Yds.	TDs	Ints.	Rating	Super Bowls	Titles
Ken Anderson	4,475	2,654	32,838	197	160	81.9	1	0
Jim Plunkett	3,701	1,943	25,882	164	198	67.5	2	2
Archie Manning	3,642	2,011	23,911	125	173	67.1	0	0
Joe Theismann*	3,602	2,044	25,206	160	138	77.4	2	1
Lynn Dickey	3,125	1,747	23,322	141	179	70.9	0	0
Dan Pastorini	3,055	1,556	18,515	103	161	59.1	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21,600</b>	<b>11,955</b>	<b>149,674</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1,009</b>	<b>71.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

### Quarterback Class of 1983

Name	Atts.	Comp.	Yds.	TDs	Ints.	Rating	Super Bowls	Titles
Dan Marino	6,049	3,604	45,173	318	185	87.6	1	0
John Elway	5,384	3,033	37,736	199	177	76.9	3	0
Jim Kelly*	3,942	2,397	29,527	201	143	85.8	4	0
Ken O'Brien	3,602	2,110	25,094	128	98	80.4	0	0
Tony Eason	1,564	911	11,142	61	51	79.7	1	0
Todd Blackledge	881	424	5,286	29	38	60.2	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21,422</b>	<b>12,479</b>	<b>153,958</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>81.7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>

\*NFL stats only.

## THE JAMES GANG

Every World Series winner from 1903 to 1980 had at least one eventual Hall-of-Famer on its roster; the 1980 Philadelphia Phillies boasted '94 inductee Steve Carlton and '95 entrant Mike Schmidt (and Hall pariah Pete Rose, too). Most players from champs since then are not yet eligible for induction. In his book "Whatever Happened to the Hall of Fame?" (Fireside, 1995), Bill James projects the players he thinks will be voted into the Hall among those who will be up for induction in the next 20 years. If he's right, the 1988 Dodgers and 1990 Reds would be the first two World Series winners without a future Hall-of-Famer.

Year	Champion	James' Projected Hall-of-Famers	Maybe, maybe not...
1993	Toronto Blue Jays	Roberto Alomar, Joe Carter, Rickey Henderson, Paul Molitor	
1992	Toronto Blue Jays	Roberto Alomar, Joe Carter, David Cone, Jack Morris, Dave Winfield	
1991	Minnesota Twins	Jack Morris, Kirby Puckett	
1990	Cincinnati Reds	None	Barry Larkin? Randy Myers? Jose Rijo?
1989	Oakland A's	Dennis Eckersley, Rickey Henderson, Dave Parker	
1988	Los Angeles Dodgers	None	Orel Hershiser?
1987	Minnesota Twins	Kirby Puckett	
1986	New York Mets	Gary Carter, Dwight Gooden	
1985	Kansas City Royals	George Brett	
1984	Detroit Tigers	Jack Morris, Alan Trammell, Lou Whitaker	
1983	Baltimore Orioles*	Eddie Murray, Cal Ripken	
1982	St. Louis Cardinals	Ozzie Smith	
1981	Los Angeles Dodgers	Steve Garvey	

\*Jim Palmer, a member of the 1983 Orioles, already is in the Hall.

## ONE-ON-FIVE

With the selection of Jason Caffey of Alabama in this year's NBA draft, the Chicago Bulls have drafted seven forwards in the first round since 1989. Five played in the NBA last season for various teams—but former Bulls power forward Horace Grant, a No. 1 pick of Chicago in 1987, outperformed the five of them combined in every relevant statistical category in his first season with the Orlando Magic. The telling 1994-95 stats:

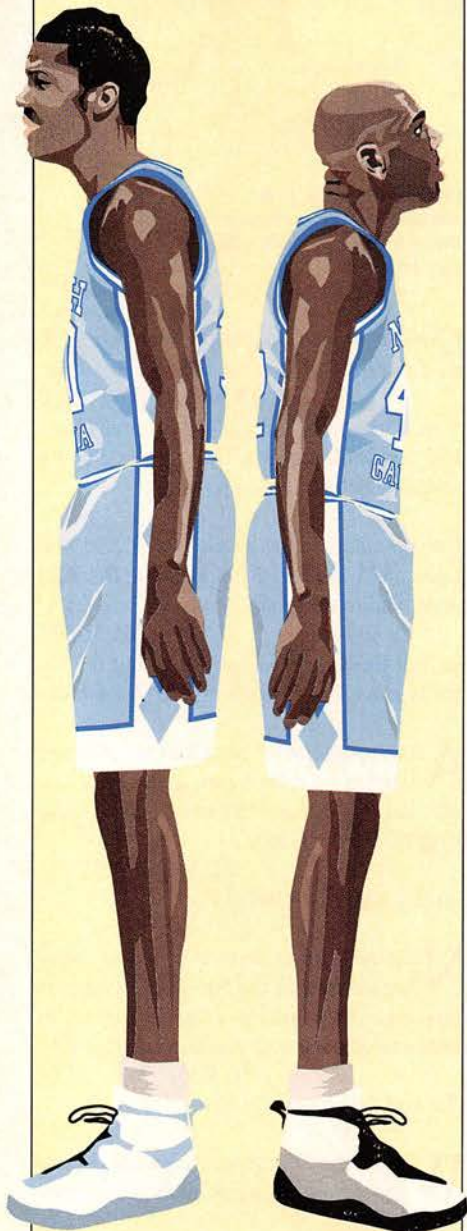
Player, '94-95 Team	Draft Year	G	GS	Mins.	FG	FGA	Pct.	Rebs.	Asst.	Stls.	Blks.	TO	PF	Pts.	PPG	RPG	APG
Stacey King, Timberwolves	1989	50	10	792	99	212	.467	165	26	24	20	64	126	266	5.3	3.3	0.5
Mark Randall, Nuggets	1991	8	0	39	3	10	.300	12	1	0	0	1	5	6	0.8	1.5	0.1
Byron Houston, SuperSonics	1992	39	0	258	49	107	.458	55	6	13	5	20	50	132	3.4	1.4	0.2
Corie Blount, Bulls	1993	68	9	889	100	210	.476	240	60	26	33	59	146	238	3.5	3.5	0.9
Dickey Simpkins, Bulls	1994	59	5	586	78	184	.424	151	37	10	7	45	72	206	3.5	2.6	0.6
<b>Totals</b>		<b>224</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2,564</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>.455</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Horace Grant, Magic	1987	74	74	2,693	401	707	.567	715	173	76	88	85	203	948	12.8	9.7	2.3



## BACK-TO-BACK

The 1995 NBA draft was the fifth since the NBA-ABA merger in which players from the same college were drafted one after the other. These are the collegiate teammates drafted consecutively in the NBA draft since 1976:

Year	College	Players (Draft Pos.)	Draft Team
1995	North Carolina	Jerry Stackhouse (3) Rasheed Wallace (4)	76ers Bullets



1992	UCLA	Tracy Murray (18) Don MacLean (19)	Spurs Pistons
1992	Arkansas	Oliver Miller (22) Lee Mayberry (23)	Suns Bucks
1988	DePaul	Rod Strickland (19) Kevin Edwards (20)	Knicks Heat
1984	North Carolina	Michael Jordan (3) Sam Perkins (4)	Bulls Mavericks

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# THE GOOD DOCTOR

**I** never saw that Sandra Bullock movie, "The Net." Who did Sandra play?

K.A., RARITAN, N.J.

Derrick Coleman. (And she won.)

**W**hat has been the biggest difference for Bret Saberhagen between playing at Shea Stadium in New York and at Coors Field in Denver?

D.B., WALSENBURG, COLO.

Mets fans drink stuff a little stronger than Coors.

**T**heir coach drove drunk. Three players smashed their car into a pole. Another player was accused of shooting his cousin. What should the Seattle Seahawks do about all this turmoil?

K.B., SUNNYSIDE, WASH.

Move to Los Angeles. After the Raiders, L.A. would consider it an improvement.

**A**gainst whom did Mike Tyson originally want his comeback to begin?

P.M., BOULDER CITY, NEV.

Martina Navratilova in Atlantic City.

**A**re there any other sibling combinations besides Marcel and Rene Lachemann who want to manage baseball teams?

G.E., DEERFIELD BEACH, FLA.

Sure. There's Sparky and Louie Anderson, Kevin and John F. Kennedy Jr., Tom and Gene Kelly, and, of course, Bobby and Courtney Cox.

**B**obby Bonilla was traded to the Baltimore Orioles. Do you see this as a lasting relationship?

L.G.

OAKLAND, MD.

Bo an "O"? No.

**H**ow did John Daly celebrate his victory at the British Open golf tournament?

C.R., CRYSTAL RIVER, FLA.

With a 4 p.m. tea time. Snapple, I believe.

**D**avid Robinson is coaching hockey in Los Angeles? I can't believe it. What was Wayne Gretzky's reaction?

B.H., SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

Larry Robinson, not David, stupid.

**M**ike Schmidt lobbied for Pete Rose to be permitted into the Hall of Fame. Why won't those Cooperstown people let Pete in?

J.B., HERKIMER, N.Y.

They're afraid he'll sell off all the memorabilia.

**S**ettle a bet, Doc. Who is the heavyweight boxing champion of the world?

L.H., EASTON, PA.

No one knows.

**B**esides the new rules, what are some other things baseball is doing to try to speed up games?

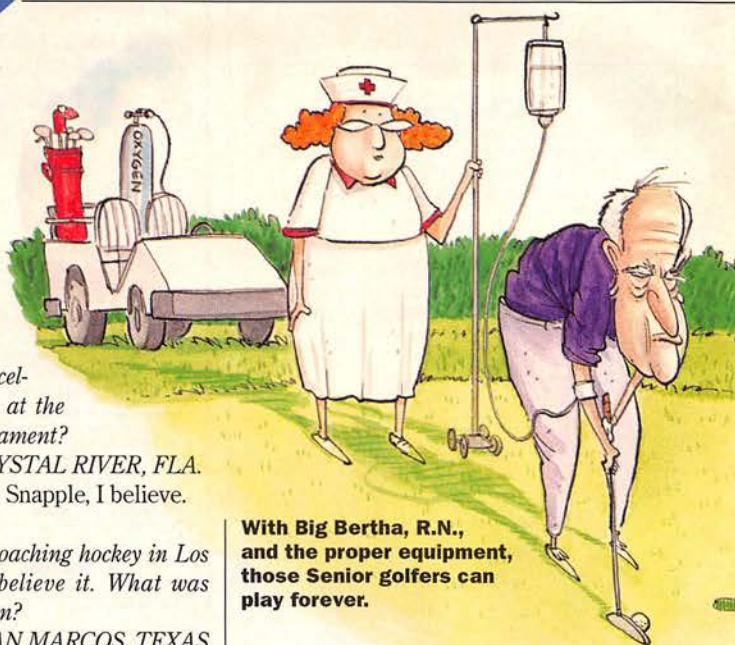
A.M., PALOS HILLS, ILL.

Telling Hideo Nomo to spin faster. Giving Barry Bonds a homer without making him run. Keeping Chili Davis away from the fans. And making Jack McDowell point that finger once, then put it back in his glove.

**I** think NBA star Dana Barros is gorgeous. What do you think?

K.B., DETROIT

I'm not sure. Which one is she?



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**F**irst there was the PGA Senior tour. Now I understand there's a Super Senior tour.

G.P., EWA BEACH, HAWAII

True. This one's for golfers 70 and older. And be looking for the debut of the Incredibly Senior tour in January.

**I** resent salary offers to athletes of \$50 million, \$75 million, \$100 million. Do these people realize the reality of real life?

J.N., PIERZ, MINN.

No, but the Good Doctor is holding out for another five bucks per letter, or else I walk!

**A**nthony Smith of the Oakland Raiders married an actress who used to call herself "Vanity" but doesn't now. Anyone else using the name "Vanity"?

C.M., CLEMSON, S.C.

Smith's teammate Nolan Harrison.

**N**atrone Means missed much of camp because he and the San Diego Chargers were reportedly millions of dollars apart in contract talks. What do you think of Means?

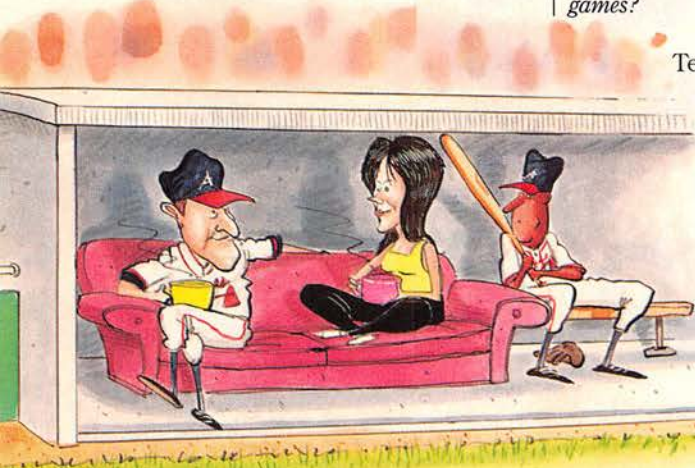
L.H., RAMONA, CALIF.

The end doesn't justify him.

**W**hy do the Minnesota Twins like the designated hitter rule more than any other team?

K.P., GRAND FORKS, N.D.

Because, having traded every one of their pitchers, the Twins only have hitters left.



**"I'll be there for you, Bobby—and wait till you meet my friends."**



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What is Michael Johnson's tentative track and field schedule for the 1996 Summer Olympics?

L.C., WACO, TEXAS

9:45 a.m.: Run 100 meters qualifying heat.  
9:47 a.m.: Run 200 meters qualifying heat.  
9:50 a.m.: Drink Gatorade. 9:51 a.m.: Do TV interview. 9:53 a.m.: Run 400 meters heat.  
9:57 a.m.: Run 800 meters heat. 10:02 a.m.: Eat slice of toast while running final lap of 1,500 meters. 10:08 a.m.: Sleep. 10:18 a.m.: Shower, brush teeth during 5,000 meters. 10:30 a.m.: Return for 100, 200, and 400 semifinal heats. Repeat every hour.

A woman ran onto the Cowboys' practice field to express her feelings toward Troy Aikman. Who did she think she was to Troy?

J.L., LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Helen of.

Don't you think at least one NHL team should take a fashion risk and don white skates?

A.C., OLEAN, N.Y.

Sure. Why not leotards with spangles, too?

George Steinbrenner mentioned something about handling Darryl Strawberry's money. Your thoughts, Doc?

A.G., WETHERSFIELD, CONN.

That's like Clyde trusting Bonnie.

I see INSIDE SPORTS is predicting good things for Alabama this football season. What's up with that?

T.B., AUBURN, ALA.

INSIDE SPORTS likes Alabama. Want to make something of it?

How do you folks think this season's game between Notre Dame and Southern California will turn out?

J.W., KNOXVILLE, TENN.

INSIDE SPORTS likes Alabama. Want to make something of it?

University of Miami football fans were upset by a magazine article that suggested the school drop football. What do you suggest, Doc?

A.W., LEHIGH ACRES, FLA.

Stop reading that magazine. ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently.

## INSIDE SPORTS

### TOP 25 Contestants through August 13

Name	City, State	Points
1. Hal Fitch	Coldwater, MI	4,166
2. Ruth Cook	Sarnia, ON	4,156
3. Don Saurbaugh	West Willow, PA	4,134
4. Jaden Davison	Bismarck, ND	4,128
5. Terry Goguen	Fredericton, NB	4,127
6. George Ristad	Glen Ellen, CA	4,125
7. Al Cannavaciolo	West Haven, CT	4,123
8. John Nicholson	Richmond Hill, ON	4,118
9. Lisa Grieco	Branford, CT	4,113
10. Bob Bilotta	Bouisville, KY	4,109
11. Bob Bilotta	Louisville, KY	4,109
12. Paul Josh	Sarnia, ON	4,103
13. Frank Morrone	Valatie, NY	4,100
14. Scott Lebrun	Eden Prairie, MN	4,099
15. Joseph Chartrand	Richmond Hill, ON	4,099
16. Mike Habighorst	Oshkosh, WI	4,098
17. Vito Tasselli	Dearborn, MI	4,094
18. John Mundwiller	St. Louis, MO	4,093
19. Brad Hulman	Huntsville, AL	4,093
20. Todd Mullen	Des Moines, IA	4,092
21. Peter Odden	Bloomington, IL	4,091
22. Tom Staab	Chicago, IL	4,091
23. Ann Huston	San Jose, CA	4,090
24. Don Mathis	Lakeland, FL	4,084
25. Brentz Thompson	Dunedin, FL	4,084



### Congratulations to our Weekly Winners!

#### July 24 - 30

Veronica Walters	Victoria, BC	\$100.00
Paul Widener	Live Oak, CA	\$75.00
Charles Ottone	Hollister, CA	\$50.00

#### July 31 - August 6

Gene Lafaro	Hamlin, NY	\$100.00
Jerry Oberst	Tacoma, WA	\$75.00
Dewayne Graham	Tucson, AZ	\$50.00

#### August 7 - 13

Troy Butner	Eden Prairie, MN	\$100.00
Robert Sawma	Cincinnati, OH	\$75.00
Brian Kirsch	Petaluma, CA	\$50.00

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\* I am writing to tell you that your program works ... I have dunked over two of our towns top players. - Richard Silva - Lincoln, CA

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By JONATHAN SILVERMAN

## Give That Kid a Contract!

I FELL IN LOVE WITH BASEBALL when I was seven years old. My dad was in the back yard with a little transistor radio, listening to a Los Angeles Dodgers game. I sat down with him, and Dodgers announcer Vin Scully slowly drew me into the game. His voice was a calm, soothing, fascinating drug.

The game turned out to be a no-hitter. From that time on, I was obsessed—just *obsessed*—with the Dodgers. When I was growing up, the first thing in the morning, before going to the bathroom, pouring my corn flakes, or anything, I'd run outside and grab the sports page to read about the Dodgers.

In those days the star players were people like Ron Cey, Davey Lopes, Reggie Smith, and Steve Garvey. Every time they won, a thrill, a rush came over me. When they lost, a piece of my heart broke off. It's the same today.

I played baseball as a kid, and I still do. In fact, I'm doing the TV series "The Single Guy" thanks in part to baseball. Every year I play in a celebrity baseball game at Dodger Stadium—"The Hollywood Stars Night," the PR people call it. It's basically an actors-vs.-actors game. Three seasons ago I had a career night.

Tom Selleck was the big draw in that game. After all, he's "Mr. Baseball." He played college ball, and he's still pretty good. The New York Yankees, Detroit Tigers, and many other teams have had him come out and take batting practice, just for fun, and he hits the ball out of the yard. He's really an accomplished player.

On this night, he came up to bat for the other team. I was in center field, a position I don't usually play except in the yearly Dodgers game; I'm really a shortstop. I figured out that the position you play depends on how successful your movies are. If your

movies make more than \$100 million, you can play the infield. Otherwise, it's the outfield.

The game is played at around 6:30 in the evening. The sun is setting in your eyes, 40,000 people are in the stands, and 39,000 of them are wearing

white T-shirts. You can't see a thing.

In his first at-bat, Selleck hit a shot over my head. It should have been a double or triple, but God was with me—I made a leaping catch and robbed him of his first hit. Selleck muttered and cursed and did

an imitation of Joe DiMaggio kicking second base when Al Gionfriddo robbed him of a homer in the Series in '47.

In his next at-bat, Selleck decided to go away from me. He hit the other way, into right field. The player out there had a bead on the ball for a second, but he lost it in the sun and screamed for me to help him. I did. I made another running catch and took away another double from Tom.

In the stands that night were producers from the film company that was making "Little Big League." They were hiring professional players and also were looking for actors who could play the game. Billy Crystal, who also plays in the Dodgers game—at shortstop, because "When Harry Met Sally" grossed more than \$100 million—recommended me. After seeing me in the field, Crystal told the producers, "Well, I don't know if Silverman can act, but he sure can play baseball."

I got the part, playing a pitcher for the Minnesota Twins. He was a bullpen guy and served as comic relief in the movie, so I like to call my job in that movie "the comic relief pitcher." Based on my performance in that movie, I was offered a deal to help create and eventually star in a television series. Thus "The Single Guy" was born, thanks to that one eventful baseball game.

Today's Dodgers are as exciting as they were when I was growing up, and I go to games regularly. Hideo Nomo is amazing, not only for what he has done for the Dodgers, the city of Los Angeles, Japan, and the Asian community, but for all of baseball. Almost single-handedly, he has brought baseball back to where it was two years ago—a truly remarkable feat. Everyone across the nation is rooting for him.

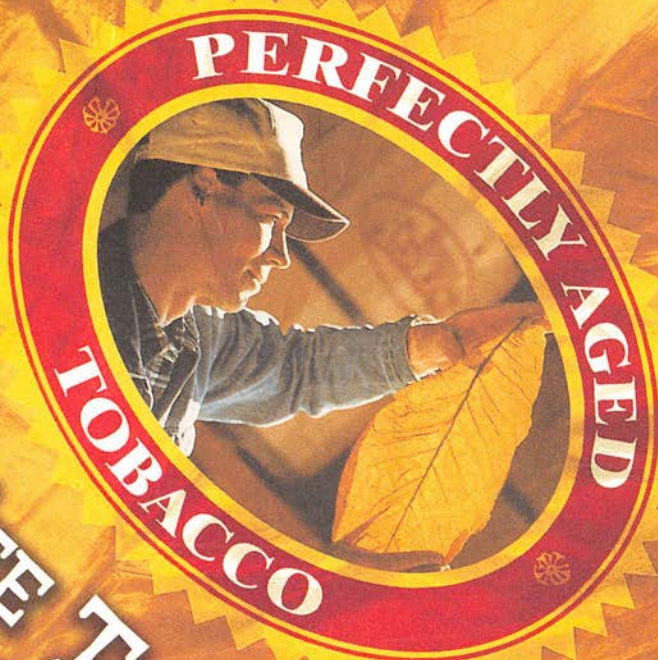
My dad's as big a baseball fan as ever; we like to go to games together. But no matter where I am, every time I hear an announcer's voice coming from a transistor radio, I think about that first time I heard Scully's voice in our back yard, and how I got hooked. ■

If "The Single Guy" could catch a mate as easily as JONATHAN SILVERMAN snares Tom Selleck's line drives, NBC would have to change the name of the show.



*Some movie producers were in the stands at the celebrity game, looking for actors who could play baseball. After seeing me in the outfield, Billy Crystal told them, "I don't know if Silverman can act, but he sure can play ball."*





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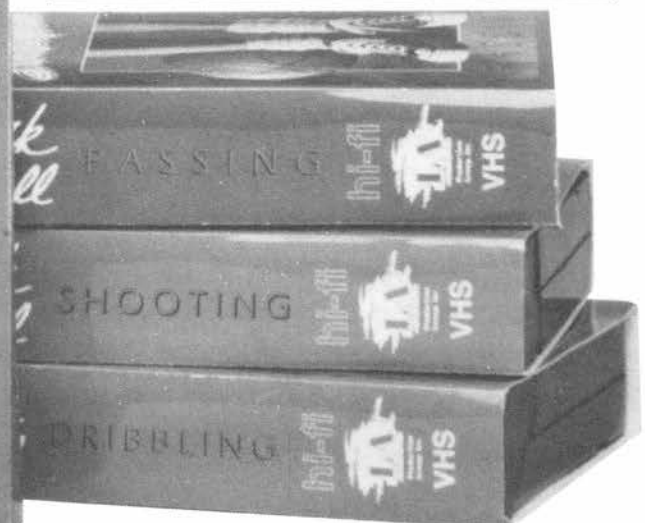
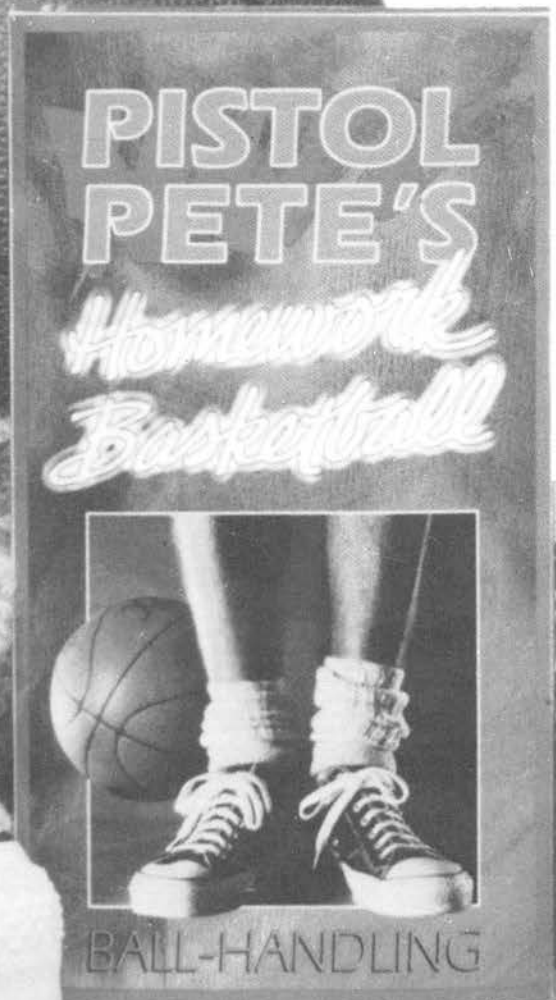
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